

Mustaches

Kemal led the two American airmen down the ancient limestone escarpment and into the din of the bazaar. The market was covered and in the half-light men shouted out the prices of watches, trinkets and bootlegged videos. Hammers clanged on new-formed copper and rang brass, pounded and shaped by the knobby hands of sweating tradesmiths in knit caps, cigarettes hanging from their mouths. Young boys hawked tea as they walked among the crowd with trays held at their shoulders. The non-stop jabber that spilled from tiny AM radios clashed with heavy thumping of disco from large boom boxes cranked way up.

Kemal steered the Americans past women in brilliant kerchiefs and floral print dresses; their hands clutched tightly at the collars of protesting children while they shopped and bartered for threads and fabrics and glassware. The labyrinthine warren of stalls randomly cobbled together of wood, stone and canvas were as familiar to Kemal as the alleys of his village near the American air base and he wound his way through the

buyers, sellers and barrow carts without thinking. He glanced back over his shoulder to make sure the Americans were still behind him. He did not want to lose them. The airmen rarely ventured beyond the fences of their base, and less now since the assassination.

The two that were with Kemal today were returning home soon and wanted gifts to bring back to waiting girlfriends. He saw that their noses were scrunched up. They were new to the air in the bazaar, rank with Samsun cigarettes, a thousand years of unwashed bodies, and the stale stench of vinegar and ammonia that leached from the toilets and drifted in a haze of grilled lamb and red onions on the char. The smell hung dense and low, sodden with the humidity from the Mediterranean that draped over the city of Adana. Kemal wondered what the Americans found offensive. He worked on the air base cleaning their barracks. The airmen had nothing to be offended about. They had plenty of their own stink; seeming to smell of the floor cleaner he used everyday to mop down the speckled brown linoleum in the rooms where they lived. But the American money was good and trips like this could make him more.

The Turks who worked on the American base called the airmen jettors for the twin-tailed F-15 fighter jets they flew. It was a word not said directly to the Americans. Its implications were complicated and reeked of derision. Kemal's services today would cost the airmen four cartons of Marlboro 100's and a fifth of Jim Beam. The cigarettes would bring much on the black market. Kemal considered the whiskey bakshish.

A tiny man with a huge mustache, three days growth of beard and no right hand came out from around the corner of a stall and pushed a stump full of gold and silver jewelry at Kemal and the airmen. Kemal waved him off. Kemal told the airmen that the

man was a foreigner, an Arab from someplace east where there were stricter punishments for thievery than here in Turkey. He also said that the jewelry was no good.

“I will take you to the place where they have good tapestries,” Kemal said over the noise around them. “What we are looking for are the two chickens.”

The American called David stopped. Kemal watched the disapproving looks of the people passing in the marketplace as they glanced at the tall man with large ears and yellow hair wearing short pants and running shoes. Kemal was used to the way the airmen dressed. The appearance of short pants and tee shirts did not shock him like it did these people in Old Adana. But it puzzled him that grown men insisted on dressing like schoolboys. If Kemal dressed in this manner, people would not take him seriously. There was also the matter of modesty. The airmen that he knew never could be accused of that.

“Chickens?” David asked. “C’mon Kemal, I’m not hanging pictures of chickens in my house. I want something nice.”

Kemal backed to the side of the busy alleyway. “The tapestries are not of chickens,” he explained. “The two chickens are red and very tiny and are woven into the fabric on either end of the tapestry. If they are there it means that they are number one. From Damascus. Those are what you want. They are the best and are worth very much.”

“How much further?” This was the other one. He was Thomas. He seemed to have some muscle and his darker skin and short, black hair could have had him mistaken for a local, except for the white tee shirt with the large letters USAF. The shirt was not a good idea. When you advertise what you are it brings only trouble. This one too was in short pants, his legs very hairy. Kemal felt a little silly with these Americans.

“It is not far. It is just up that way.” Kemal pointed up the twisting alleyway. “Then we make a turn and we will be there.” He would be glad when this was finished. Kemal knew he would be having some of the whiskey when he returned home. He resumed walking with the Americans close behind.

At the place where they made a turn to the left to find the stall with the tapestries, an old woman wearing sunglasses sat in the dirt holding a baby. A worn brass bowl lay next to her in the dust. The baby was crying. Kemal shook his head in disgust. He noticed Thomas reach into his pocket and was bending to put something in the woman’s bowl. Kemal walked back and pushed Thomas’ arm away.

“What are you doing?” Thomas yanked his arm away from Kemal. “This lire isn’t worth crap and I’m not giving her much.”

“Gypsy.” Kemal motioned for the American to keep walking.

“So what?” Thomas still held the lire notes in his hand. He wasn’t moving.

“C’mon, Tom. You heard him. She’s a gypsy.”

“Since when do you know from gypsies, Arneson? You don’t know a damn thing.”

Kemal did not want a scene drawing more attention than they were already getting. He stepped closer to Thomas and spoke to the side of his head. “Gypsy trick. We go farther, another old woman. Maybe she has a leg that is no good. Maybe she has no leg. Different woman, different bowl, same baby. Then we walk more and there is a young woman sitting in a chair with wheels, another type of bowl, same baby. We walk more, more women begging, same baby.” Kemal held up his hands and shrugged. “They are gypsies.”

He looked over at the old woman. Dust from the foot traffic around her settled on her clothes like soot. She had no expression. The baby continued to cry. Kemal had heard that the gypsies pinched the babies to get them to cry when needed. He watched Thomas tuck the money back into his pocket. Kemal thought there must not be beggars in America if it was so easy for these airmen to fall for such tricks. He motioned for them to follow. David was already on his way. Thomas hesitated and turned to look behind him. Kemal could see that the old gypsy and the baby were gone. A round, compressed indentation from the woman's bottom was the only thing left in the dirt.

Kemal and the two airmen continued up the alleyway closer to the stall with the tapestries. Two men with black, tousled hair and brownish suit jackets open in front, stood off to the left pitching the quality of their carpets. Kemal was familiar with the two and suspected this passage would be difficult with Thomas and David in tow.

"Hey, Americans!" one of the men shouted. He pointed into his small shop. "You need rug, yes? Many nice rugs I have. Come. You look." He motioned for the three to come closer.

Kemal shook his head and said that today was not a good day.

The other carpet man was working some worry beads on a string wound around his left hand. He had a Samsun locked between his teeth and spoke around it.

"Americans. Very much money. You buy my rugs, okay?"

Kemal again said that they would not be buying any carpets on this day.

David stopped and pointed to his pockets. "No money."

Kemal saw the man grab the American's elbow. The man said he would help find the American a carpet that was very nice. The man said he would be very happy to help

empty the wallet of the American as well. Buying a carpet would help ease the discomfort of carrying such a fat wallet through the market, the man said. David snatched his elbow back.

“The only carpet I would buy today would be a flying one so I could get out of this armpit. You got one of those there, friend?”

The man with the worry beads backed away. He sneered, then put his right hand into the crook of his left elbow and raised his fist. He shouted to Kemal that he was a whore. He wanted to know if Kemal smoked cigarettes as he did his business with the Americans like the old prostitutes of Bakasi Street were known to do, or if he enjoyed it so much that he did not need a distraction.

Kemal began to walk away hoping the other two would follow. Quickly they were in stride next to him. When they had gone ahead a bit, Kemal turned and made his hand into the shape of a pistol. Then he pointed the hand pistol in the direction of the carpet men and motioned like he was taking shots with a gun. “Shi’a,” he said. “No good.”

“How can you tell what they are?” Thomas wanted to know.

“Yeah,” said David. “You guys all look like Turks to me.”

Kemal smoothed down the corners of his very black mustache with the finger and thumb of his left hand. “You can’t?” Kemal thought these two Americans had not paid much attention during the time they had already spent in his country. Everyone knew that how a man wore his mustache would tell you what he was. Kemal wore his like a Kurd, with the ends of the mustache curving down around the corners of the mouth. Those Shi’a, being the desert drifters that they were, let their mustaches curve slightly upward from the corners of the mouth. The Arabs wanted to appear fierce and cunning and cut

their mustaches straight across extending their effective grimace. The Americans, again they appeared nothing more than boys, clean-shaven in the fashion of the United States military. “We will go to the tapestries now,” Kemal said. He turned and led the way.

The tapestries hung limp from wooden rods suspended from the ceiling of the stall. There were many of them and they all were different. Kemal had been here many times with other airmen from the base looking for souvenirs. The man who sold the tapestries knew Kemal well and greeted him as a friend. He slipped something into the side pocket of Kemal’s sport coat. Kemal motioned the Americans to come in closer. He grabbed the edge of one of the tapestries.

“Look. See, they are quite small,” he said. He pointed to the tiny, red profiles of roosters on both ends of the tapestry.

The sharp stutter of a semi-automatic cracked the air. The echo of the gunshots ping-ponged around the concrete apartment buildings that surrounded the old marketplace. The bazaar quieted like it had been hushed with a blanket. Again, a rapid crack, crack, crack. Kemal cocked his head to determine the direction of the gunfire. He thought the shots were coming from near the newer end of the bazaar by the old river bridge. He saw the American, David, on his stomach, his eyes wide. Thomas ducked behind a small table littered with tea glasses and full ashtrays. “What the hell?” he said.

“It is the maroonheads,” Kemal said. “They do not like to ask questions.” The soldiers were called maroonheads for the burgundy berets they wore; Turkish Special Forces going door to door in a city of a half-million people searching for the shooter who had assassinated the martial law commander of Adana three days before.

David remained on his stomach. “I thought you said we didn’t have to worry,” he

whispered harshly to Kemal.

“You don’t.” Kemal had not moved. He still grasped the edge of the Syrian tapestry in his hand. Ever since the craziness to the east, there was much more gunfire in the city. Everyone now had a cause. Kemal had little time for politics. He just wanted to make money. He had a new wife that sat in his tiny house in the village and a father-in-law that demanded a certain level of comfort for his daughter. “You are American. Look how you are dressed. They will see you are harmless.”

Thomas had gotten up from behind the table. The muzzled silence that followed the gunfire began to lift and life again swirled through stalls of the bazaar. “Who are they looking for, Kemal?”

“Whomever. Anyone to be the goat. There are many now who make trouble. The maroonheads will make a show and there will be no trouble for awhile.”

Thomas told Kemal how he had been out on the tarmac at the air base the previous morning when the transports had landed full of these Special Forces. “My C.O. ordered us inside the nearest hangar. He said you don’t fuck with these guys. The captain said there were fifteen hundred of them and they were trained to shoot first and screw the questions. Captain said not to even look at those Turks, and don’t even think of running. He said to just stay away.”

Kemal was familiar with the reputation of the maroonheads. This was how Ankara kept a lid on the craziness. He nodded. “Your captain is right. Someone must have tried to run and that is why we hear the guns.” Kemal shoved the tapestry he was holding closer to Thomas. “You like this one?”

“Probably was those idiots from up in the mountains.” David got to his feet and

was brushing dirt from the front of his shirt and the caps of his bare knees.

Kemal bristled. He looked coldly at the stupid expression on the American. “I will tell you something, jetter.” Kemal sneered. He reached into his pants pocket. It was more reaction than anything. He took his worry beads out, and began to work them with his left hand. His right hand stroked his mustache. “The Kurds are in no way involved in this. We do not make stupid actions. You do not murder someone such as the general who administers the martial law and think that it is a smart thing. It is the crazies who do this and bring the maroonheads down on all who live here.” Kemal glared.

His friend with the tapestries wanted to know if there was a problem with the Americans. And look at how they are dressed, he said. Kemal told the man there was more for this jetter to be shameful about than just his clothing. Kemal watched David shift back and forth on his feet. He knew he had made him uncomfortable.

“Jesus, Kemal,” David said. “I don’t have a clue about who’s shooting who.”

Kemal furiously fingered the beads in his hand. He pushed the beads quickly between his thumb and forefinger. He counted each one.

David kept on. “You all just seem to hate each other, but you hate everyone else worse. It’s hard to keep it straight.”

“Watch how you speak,” Kemal said. “You have said that you cannot tell one Turk from the other. If I was anybody else you could be dead now. If you start speaking too loud or too much near the maroonheads, many people could die because you are stupid.” Kemal told the Americans to choose their tapestries because they needed to leave soon. He was losing patience. Things were getting fragile in town and dragging the Americans around was making Kemal feel conspicuous. The maroonheads did not

care one way or the other. They were close by and if they did not like the turn of a man's mustache there could be more business with the guns.

The seller of the tapestries rolled each of the Americans' purchases and bound them with rough twine. Kemal paced impatiently out in the alleyway keeping watch for soldiers as the Americans completed their business. This was not supposed to be a complicated trip. The sooner the three left the bazaar the better Kemal would feel. His career as a houseboy for these airmen brought him lots of money but he did not like always feeling on the edge of trouble. He thought he should start asking for something more.

David was the first to exit the shop. "Everything okay, Kemal?"

"We should leave."

David nodded his head and looked around. Thomas came out from the stall, his bound tapestry tucked under his arm.

"Where now?" Thomas asked.

Kemal pointed to a dusty shaft of daylight that beamed in on the right of the alleyway. Standing near the opening was a young woman, her head wrapped in a bright orange scarf. She leaned on a pair of crutches, holding an old tea mug with one hand and a baby in another. She was smiling. Kemal ignored her as he walked past and out into the sun. He heard one of the jettlers mutter "another gypsy, but was that the same baby?"

Kemal was in a hurry to leave the old section of town and its bazaar. That was where the trouble seemed to be. He quickly led the Americans over the gray-green murk of the Seyhan River across the old stone bridge that led to the wide, central boulevard that cut through downtown Adana. The boulevard was a free-for-all of carts and cars and

pedestrians trying hard to stay alive. Taxis honked angrily, quarreling over who had the right of way. Buses carrying more human cargo than they should roared by, leaving clouds of diesel that settled on everything that lined the busy thoroughfare; tobacco shops, stands selling phony Pepsi, men squatting along the street roasting kebobs of lamb over large pans of charcoal, wrapping them in cones of old newspaper, and chestnut vendors with their bright red barrows full of nuts. The trees that arched over the street were there to filter the pollution but were outmatched and particulates of this and that fell and became condiments to lunch and dinner. Kemal found a table on the sidewalk in front of a café that he liked. He sat down and the Americans joined him. Kemal ordered tea. The other two each ordered an Efes.

“I do not like beer,” Kemal said. A young, clean-shaven waiter had set a cold pitcher of water in the middle of the table. Sweat ran down the pitcher in rivulets forming a ring on the table.

“Well,” said David laying the bundled tapestry at his foot, “the coke here is fake and that,” he nodded towards the water, “put me in the infirmary for three days. Had to give me an IV for dehydration. I had the trots so bad I still haven’t gained the weight back. Beer is the only cold thing here I can drink.”

Kemal thanked the waiter for the tea he had just put on the table. “What is this trots?” The waiter delivered the beer to the Americans.

Thomas had taken a swallow from his bottle. “It’s when you get really sick, Kemal. You know, you can’t quit going to the bathroom.” He made a motion like he was pulling down his shorts. “You know?” His eyebrows arched.

Kemal made a face. “Yes.” He needed to clear that from his mind. He picked up

two cubes of sugar from a small plate left by the waiter. Kemal dropped them into his tea and then stirred with a tiny, silver spoon. When the sugar had dissolved, he laid the spoon on the table and sipped the tea. He watched the progress of a long, wooden wagon being pulled by a horse in the middle of the busy boulevard. The wagon was loaded with melons. The man who drove the wagon wore a snap-brim cap and a vest over a dirty long-sleeved shirt. Kemal saw foam dripping from the mouth of the horse. The man seemed not to notice the angry drivers behind him who shouted curses from their open windows and beat on their car horns. He just snapped the reins harder over the sweating, foaming animal. The horse appeared to stumble and its front legs buckled. Kemal watched the ruined creature struggle to get back up but it could not raise itself from a kneeling position there in the street. The animal's eyes were wide and stricken. The driver of the wagon stood on his seat whipping at the horse with the reins and cursing it loudly. People began to gather on the sidewalks to watch. The honking of the traffic stuck behind the wagon merged in unison and to Kemal sounded like one continual blast. He saw the horse tip over on its side and convulse briefly. Then it lay still.

“That guy needs a truck,” said David. He took a drink of his beer. “Look at what he is doing now.” He jutted his jaw toward the melon wagon.

The driver of the wagon had gotten down from his old, cracked leather perch. He began to kick the animal, shouting curses, his face a flustered red.

“That man there,” Kemal said, nodding in the direction of the dead horse and the wagon. “He is Shi’a.”

David put his beer bottle on the table. “Now how can you know that, Kemal? Christ.”

“The mustache thing, right?” Thomas asked.

“There is that,” said Kemal. “But look. He kicks at a dead horse. If he was Kurd, he would get those who sound their horns to leave their cars and help move the animal. Then he would give each of those who helped a melon from the back of the wagon. If he were Arab he would cover the melons with canvas, then auction pieces of the horse to whomever would give him the highest price. The melons he would keep covered and then charge even more at the market for his inconvenience. This Shi’a, he makes jihad on the horse because the animal’s death in the middle of the street is not God’s will. Therefore, the horse is an infidel for defying God and collapsing dead, when the horse should be pulling this man’s bountiful wagon of melons to market. That is how I can tell that man is Shi’a. And also the mustache.”

The activity that sprang from the spectacle of the dead horse reminded Kemal of a street circus. The constabulary had arrived in their white hats with the black, shiny brims and light-blue short-sleeved uniforms, golden epaulets shining on the shoulders of the policemen in the smoggy sun. They blew their whistles and waved their sticks and tried to coerce traffic around the melon wagon. This seemed to make the man with the dead horse angrier. He took the cap from his head and slapped at the belly of the creature. Two constables pulled him away. Sirens wailed.

“The fire department is here.” Thomas stood to get a better look. “They are unrolling a tarp.”

“I’ll bet they’re gonna to try and slide that tarp underneath the horse to lift it.” David asked the waiter for two more beers and placed four thousand lire on the table. “I just wonder where they will lift it to.”

Kemal said the firemen would probably drag the horse up on to the median so that the wagon of melons could be towed. He noticed that the constables had gotten some of the unruly traffic moving around the infidel horse. He also saw that the scrambled scene had attracted a six-man patrol of maroonheads. They stood together at the end of the block on the same side of the street as the café. Their weapons were slung from their shoulders. The grim, brick faces of the soldiers revealed nothing as they watched the fire corps work to maneuver the large canvas tarp under the horse. Their mustaches were identical. Government cut. Kemal nervously stirred the small amount of tea that remained in his glass. He did not want to make eye contact with any members of the patrol. He knew that the presence of the Americans and how they were dressed could be enough of a magnet to attract them. Kemal was thankful for the chaos across the street. He did not want trouble.

“You gotta be kidding,” said David smiling and shaking his head.

Thomas pointed across the street. “I know. Did you see that? Did you see that, Kemal?”

Kemal shook his head no. His mind was down the street with the maroonheads.

“No. I saw nothing.”

David was laughing. “A coupla kids tried to grab a melon from the wagon and the old guy went after them.”

“Yeah, and he caught the one with the melon and started punching him right in the head.” Thomas took a drink of his Efes and stood to see through the crowd that had grown bigger near the horseless wagon.

Kemal looked over and saw two of the constabulary drag the old man off the boy

who had tried to steal the fruit. Another policeman held the kid by his collar. He dropped the melon. It landed, smashing apart and green guts of the fruit spilled over the concrete of the sidewalk on the far side of the boulevard. "I would like you to sit," Kemal said to Thomas. "The shirt that you wear yells that you are American military. I do not want the maroonheads to visit us here at this table."

Thomas remained standing. "They're not going to do anything to us. They're staying on our base."

"Yeah," agreed David. "We've been told to give them space but they're not going to pull anything with us. They can't risk an incident. We're their hosts."

Kemal knew the Americans were slow in understanding. "I work at the air base too. That does not make me safe. I do not want them down here."

David pulled his chair closer to the table and leaned on his elbows. "Why is that? You said the Kurds weren't involved."

Thomas sat down slowly. "They're coming this way."

"As I said, they do not ask questions. If they do not like how I look, they will shoot me." Kemal adjusted his chair so that he would not face the soldiers directly as they walked up the sidewalk. He motioned to the boy serving at the café for more tea and kept his eyes glued on the activity in the street. He felt clammy and could feel himself perspire under his shirt like the beads that ran down the sides of the pitcher of water at the center of the table. Kemal had done nothing that would interest these maroonheads but he thought he should shave his mustache although he would then appear as boyish as the Americans. He would keep the mustache off as long as the soldiers were in Adana.

"And you said there was nothing to worry about," said David. "You do

something, Kemal?"

Kemal said no. He pointed across the street. "They have moved it. See." The attention at the table had changed back to the dead horse. They watched six men of the fire corps and three constables drag the tarp with the horse up onto the low concrete median of the boulevard. Blue lights of emergency vehicles seemed to whirl everywhere. A towing truck from an automotive garage had arrived with its yellow lights flashing to move the wagon of melons. Two of the policemen kept the angry old melon man restrained. The boy who had tried to snatch the melon was being lectured with the shaking finger of another very annoyed policeman. Taxis and Toyotas full of frustrated men smoking cigarettes began to unsnarl under the direction of two brave constables in glow-orange vests.

"Stand up you." The order came from a square-shaped man in sharply creased fatigues, wearing spit-shined black boots and a burgundy beret folded severely over the right side of his head. The webbing of his weapon was still over his shoulder, but the barrel was pointed at Kemal.

"He's with us," David said to the soldier with the gun and the other five members of the patrol who stood by the table like stone men.

"Yeah," said Thomas. "Kemal's our friend. He works with us on base." He smiled at the maroonheads. His teeth gleamed white against the olive of his skin.

Kemal stood. He held his hands up, palms pointed to the sky. He still did not want to look in the eyes of these soldiers. Kemal kept looking at the emergency operation across the street, but he did not see anything. He was blind from fear and thought he could be sick.

David stood also. “Look. He’s been with us all day. He took us to get these.” He bent to pick up his rolled tapestry on the ground by his chair. A hand shoved him back on to his seat. The five maroonheads who did not have their weapons drawn had fanned around the table. It was one of those who had pushed David back into his sitting position.

“Hey, you can’t do that.” Thomas made a move to stand, but didn’t. “We’re guests in your country.”

The soldier who pointed the gun said Kemal should tell the Americans to shut up. He told Kemal to tell them that they were not guests, they were only here as a goodwill gesture.

Kemal turned to Thomas. “He wants you to quit talking.”

“He knows what he can do.” Thomas smirked.

“He is very serious.” Kemal’s eyes went back and forth between the Americans. “You must shut up.” He nodded toward the weapon. “This man says you are not guests. He says you are here only on the goodwill of the Turkish government.”

David leaned over to Thomas and said under his breath, “Goodwill my ass. If it weren’t for us the Turks would all be speaking Russian right now.”

The maroonhead with the gun wanted to know what the bulge was in the side pocket of Kemal’s jacket. Kemal had forgotten about the man who sold the tapestries and what he had slipped into the pocket. He slid his hand into the pocket and felt the steel of the gun’s barrel press into his chest. For sure, now, Kemal knew he would be sick. His hand came out slowly gripping a bundle of lire notes bound by rubber. He could feel his hand tremble. Kemal held out the bundle for inspection. The soldier took

the roll of money and looked it over like it could explode. He asked Kemal if he had made all that from the Americans and tossed the money to another member of his patrol. The bundle of bakshish that he had gotten from the man who sold the tapestries was passed around the circle of maroonheads. Kemal did not feel like going into detail. He told the soldiers that the Americans had lots of money, why else would he play tour guide to a bunch of schoolboys. Just look at that one with the ears and Kemal pointed at David.

“Everything alright?” David asked. “You told them you’re with us I hope, ‘cause they wouldn’t dare pull any shit with Tom and I sitting right here.”

Kemal looked around at the Special Forces patrol that stood at the table. He could see the reflection of the whirling blue lights from across the street in the wrap-around sunglasses of the soldiers. The bundled lire was tossed back to him.

The soldier with a bead on Kemal lowered his weapon. “You are lucky to know such rich people, Kurd. It also helps that they are harmless; it keeps you out of trouble. Be a good little schoolteacher and make sure your schoolboys return to the American base safe. Or, I can tell you, you will not.”

Kemal heard a threat in the brief forced laughter that followed the soldier’s advice. He knew now that he was suspect and had just been given a warning. He stood tightly gripping his bankroll and watched the maroonheads walk away. The man with the tapestries had dropped the money in his pocket to say thank you for the business Kemal steered his way. The situation with the Special Forces could have been much worse if the Americans had not been with him. Kemal considered himself lucky that he was even given the option of a question. With his mustache, he could have easily been just another dead infidel in the street, like the horse who was now being winched into the payload of a

dump truck.

“What’d they say, Kemal?” Thomas’ face was eager like a boy watching his first football match.

Kemal gave his weak knees a rest and sat back down in his chair. He could feel a tremor travel down both arms so he pushed his hands deep into the pockets of his sport coat so that no one could see the extent of his shakes. He decided that when he returned home he would definitely shave off his mustache. The new father-in-law would not be happy. His friends would think him a coward, but this had been enough attention. He wanted to stay far away from the eyes of the maroonheads.

David slid his chair closer to the table. “Yeah, I was wondering there for a minute. Those guys are real assholes. What did they say to you?”

Kemal’s mouth had gone dry. His tea was cold now and he had no stomach to order more. He coughed slightly to clear his throat. “The maroonheads said I was lucky to have friends such as yourselves.”

“See, we told you,” David said. “They wouldn’t dare do anything with Tom and I here.” He swallowed the rest of the Efes in the bottle.

Thomas leaned back and folded his arms across his chest. “Thanks for taking us down here today, Kemal. It’s a good thing we were along.” Thomas turned his attention back across the boulevard. “Looks like they let the kids go.”

“They’re taking away the old man though,” said David and pointed to the two constables that were helping the owner of the dead horse into a squad.

Kemal watched. Nothing would happen to the crazy Shi’a. Kemal knew how things ran with the constabulary now that people were siding up. Even more reason to

shave, Kemal thought. Without the mustache no one would know what he was. It would be like disappearing. Kemal wondered what that would look like in the mirror.