

Enis Batur

THE HIGH PASTURES

Four days after the coup, precisely, they found it possible to hold commencement exercises: my friends didn't leave me alone for a minute, even Sister Marie, with whom I'd fought for years, came to me and warily brushed my hair. There wasn't a girl who didn't cry. Yet the only one who stayed stuck to her chair, frozen, lifeless, when her name was read out, was I: who was it in me that went up to the principal, who held in her hand the red-ribboned diploma, then like a sleepwalker crossed the quadrangle and vanished into the building? I still don't remember what idea drove the logic of those scenes: I could only go to Yassiada once, since that day it's never been off my mind, the image of that scarecrow sitting on the stool my uncle showed me—not that, nor the heat wave, nor the coffin at Teshvikiye Mosque, nor my mother's choice of total silence: life, a seal.

They say this summer's the hottest ever in Istanbul. Each night I lie down on the balcony with my lover and listen to Reggiani deep in the dark, grief undiminished. He'll be twenty-six this week, he's a private bank guard. I love the way he looks around the parlor with child-like wonder: as his eyes roam over the Yildiz vases, the crystal fire of Murano chandeliers, the Wedgewood ashtray where he shyly taps his cigarette, perhaps he's thinking