



YOUNG OSMAN

Gundogdu Gencer



YOUNG OSMAN

a play by:

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translated by

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CHARACTERS:

OSMAN

OSMAN'S MOTHER

OSMAN'S FATHER

I. ELDER

II. ELDER

THE CRIER

THE SERGEANT

THE MESSENGER

I. YOUTH

II. YOUTH

I. PEASANT

II. PEASANT

III. PEASANT

IV. PEASANT

V. PEASANT

MOTHER: What do you want a horse for? A peasant needs oxen, water buffalo, and cattle if he can afford it. They are rich men's sons. Are they your match? Of course they're not. They can play jerid, they can go hunting. How can the son of poorly Ismail be a match for the sons of sires, sons of landlords? They're not your equals.

OSMAN: "A man must have a horse, must have arms." Isn't that what father says, my pretty mother? Isn't it your lullaby my old goodly mother that you sing to me: "Let him become a pasha when he grows up, let him become a governor"?

MOTHER: Osman, my dear Osman, the light of my eye, what turns a peasant into a pasha is the yield of his crops, my brave son. A man is a man driving his plough; and who does that better than you? A brave man is brave in his scramble with the soil. You tell me now, what man in the whole village calls himself brave, and gets more out of the soil than you? Our field is everyone's envy. Come now Osman, we must all be grateful. God has praised our soil. Plant a man in this soil, and he bears fruit. Thank God a thousand times with each morsel for the soil that Çukur is, for the river that Ceyhan is, my dear unfledged Osman. The elders say that a thousand tribes stepped on Misis. No king, no sultan who hasn't stepped on Misis ever had any fortune, any success.

OSMAN: Don't talk to me about farming mother. Look at my father. Don't you think I can see you and all the rest of the poor peasants of Misis? That soil you talk about, that mighty river... How many pashas has that raised, how many has it prospered, so I can have any hopes. The time of the plough has passed mother, now is the time for conquests, now is the time for the horseman with his sword.

MOTHER: Woe! He's really gone this time, my poor boy. Woe to Osman! Oh my poor head, oh my poor troubled head. A horse is worth two oxen. Is that what you want, eh my wild, wild boy? The oxen are our lifeblood. What use is a horse, eh? Your playing jerid, going hunting would cost us our oxen. Is that what you want my dear, my brave Osman? Woe, woe to me, woe!

OSMAN: Woe to me for your woes mother. How do sires become sires, landlords landlords...

MOTHER: The Sultan, our sovereign makes them sires, landlords...

OSMAN: He can make me too...

MOTHER: In exchange for troops...

OSMAN: Then I'll go.

MOTHER: To become a sire, eh? You'll give up the ghost, to make a sire out of a sire's son. Come now, my Osman, listen to your old mother. Horses, jerid, get those things out of your head. Those are not for you. You are the sire of your soil.

OSMAN: Once they mount the horse, and swing with all their might...

I. ELDER: And when he threw the javelin, seven villages echoed his throw, the fair maidens of seven villages came running like partridges, over the hills, over the rocks, they came flying like cranes, each with seven rows of gold coins on their foreheads, they came to see the valiant young man on his bay horse, to fall at his feet and become his concubines. Each of them with seven camel-loads of dowry, they arrived at the flat of our village. He was such a valiant young man that the sun hid behind the clouds fearing the contest. His forehead shone so... His sword more so... Then he put at an arm's length all the seventy seven maidens of the seven villages... Only a glimpse of him mounting his bay horse was caught. The next thing was the dust he raised behind seven hills, and the shimmer of his scimitar reflecting from the stars...

II. ELDER: His scimitar... Three brave men, weighing 40 stone each could not move it...

OSMAN: But the valiant young man on his bay horse...

I. ELDER: ...swung his scimitar. The bay horse was like the wind. Seven springs, seven summers, seven autumns and seven winters his name was uttered with respect in the whole of the Ottoman domain. News arrived, pigeons flew, more news

arrived. He was to be found nowhere. Nowhere to be seen, let alone caught. He seized forty castles single-handedly, took three thousand heads...

II. ELDER: ...and what castles! All the infidel kings had gotten together to build them.

OSMAN: But the valiant young man on his bay horse...

I. ELDER: ...knocked down all castle gates with one kick, to welcome the Sultan...

II. ELDER: ...and spoke thus: "A man-child is not born to eat bread, a brave man swings his scimitar, takes heads, loses heads, mounts the flag on the bastion of the enemy, and does it all for the Ottomans.", then fell at the feet of the Sultan.

I. ELDER: It is told that the valiant young man on his bay horse had three such campaigns. He thrice captured forty castles, he thrice took three thousand heads.

OSMAN: Then... Then what?

II. ELDER: It is told that he first became the Governor of Bosnia...

OSMAN: Is that a fair place?

I. ELDER: Most handsome.

II. ELDER: ...then a vizier in Istanbul...

I. YOUTH: A vizier in Istanbul, eh?

OSMAN: Then?... Then what?

(II. YOUTH PREPARES TO WRESTLE.)

I. ELDER: That's what is told.

II. YOUTH: (STARTS CIRCLING.) Ha! Ha!

(I. YOUTH PREPARES TO WRESTLE TOO.)

II. ELDER: Come on, let's see the youngsters.

I. **ELDER:** Come on, let's watch you wrestle.

II. **ELDER:** Come on Osman!

I. **ELDER:** You've grown up too, to become a valiant young man.

(OSMAN STARTS TO PREPARE.)

II. **ELDER:** Let us see...

FATHER: Osman! **(II. ELDER HEARS THE FATHER AND STOPS, OSMAN DOESN'T.)**
Osman, come here! **(OSMAN STARTS TO GO AFTER HIS FATHER.)**

I. **YOUTH:** He wrestles with his oxen, poor Osman.

II. **YOUTH:** Fair maidens aren't for him, he sleeps with oxen.

I. **YOUTH:** Wrestling? He does, with his plough.

(THEY LAUGH AND CROSS OSMAN'S PATH.)

II. **YOUTH:** Here, here! Ha! **(GETS READY TO WRESTLE. AS OSMAN TURNS TO HIM...)**

I. **YOUTH:** Look here! Ha!

(THEY LAUGH. OSMAN FACES ONE, THEN THE OTHER YOUTH. THEY TEASE HIM, HE TRIES TO FREE HIMSELF.)

II. **YOUTH:** This isn't your field, ho!

I. **YOUTH:** Whoa! Whoa!

II: **YOUTH:** Whoa Osman, whoa!

I. **YOUTH:** Whoa!

I. **ELDER:** Stop that!

II. **ELDER:** Leave him alone, he's not your match.

FATHER: Osman! **(HE DRAGS OSMAN AWAY. OSMAN STARTS WORKING WITH HIS PARENTS. AFTER A WHILE THE VILLAGERS JOIN IN AND WORK FOR A WHILE. AS THE DAY ENDS AND THEY START GOING BACK...)**

I. PEASANT: They're coming! They're coming, ho! The Ottomans are coming!

(THE VILLAGERS SCATTER. OSMAN'S DRAGGED AWAY BY HIS MOTHER. AS THE STAGE EMPTIES, THE MUSIC FROM THE MILITARY BAND - MEHTER- GROWS LOUDER.)

THE CRIER: Hear ye, hear ye! Our sovereign, the most exalted Sultan Murat has opened the campaign upon Baghdad... The city of Baghdad shall be captured from the hands of its Safavid rulers. The Khalif of the universe and the sultan of the earthly world, his excellency, the divine Sultan Murat decrees that the battle must be fitting of the glory of the Sublime Ottoman State, that swords must be bloodied, castles demolished, heads taken, heads lost, but whatever the cost, the city of Baghdad captured. Hear ye, hear ye! The royal army shall be billeted here for a few days... All the needs of the army to be taken care of... Hear ye, hear ye! **(THE CRIER EXITS. PANIC IN THE VILLAGE.)**

II. PEASANT: Our end has come neighbours...

III. PEASANT: We're really done for...

IV. PEASANT: The cattle will be quartered...

V. PEASANT: Ottomans descend on us...

I. PEASANT: Keep an eye on the wheat and the barley...

II. PEASANT: Put it in caves, put it in wells...

III. PEASANT: Save the girls, save the brides...

IV. PEASANT: Woe to the cattle...

V. PEASANT: The Ottomans are upon us...

(THEY DISPERSE. ONLY OSMAN KEEPS STARING AFTER THE CRIER. THE MOTHER ENTERS, TRIES TO PULL HIM AWAY.)

MOTHER: Move on, you mad goose!

OSMAN: Our sovereign sultan is staying here!

MOTHER: Never mind the sultan, he'll move on.

OSMAN: Baghdad must be captured, heads must be taken, heads must be lost...

MOTHER: Damn Baghdad. We are ruined, our hearth will go cold. Don't stand there.

OSMAN: I shall go too, mother. It is decreed by our sovereign sultan...

MOTHER: Slay me Osman, before you go.

OSMAN: A man must swing the sword, spill blood. A man-child is not to eat bread, a valiant man swings his scimitar, loses his head for glory.

MOTHER: My dear, dear wild boy, my beloved Osman. You are yet a babe, you are just a little child, my dear Osman. You are my mainstay, you are for the soil, the fields, the ploughing and the sowing... Come Osman, don't make your mother cry, don't put out our hearth altogether.

OSMAN: I'll go to the Sultan. A brave man must kick open gates, capture castles to become a pasha, a vizier in Istanbul.

MOTHER: May your Sultan sink to the ground, and your Baghdad, and Istanbul, too. You are my pasha, you are the vizier of your field. The Sultan has his troops, has his sergeants... Don't leave your fateful mother my Osman, don't make an invalid of your poor father. He has his troops, his sergeants, his viziers, his pashas... But who does your poor mother have, save you? **(SHE COLLAPSES. OSMAN HAS LEFT. THE FATHER ENTERS.)**

FATHER: Damned woman, get a move on! Everybody's hidden everything they've got, taken precautions, and you stay there stiff as a poker. Get up, get a move on!

MOTHER: I'm without a leg to stand on. Osman's gone.

FATHER: Gone? Gone where? What are you moaning about?

MOTHER: Gone. He's left us limbless and gone. Left us soulless and heartless. Osman's gone.

FATHER: Has something happened to Osman, woman? Out with it, stop mumbling.

MOTHER: Something's happened to *us*. And how. He mingled with the Sultan's troops, went to join the campaign. My baby Osman, my poor little Osman. He took his own mad counsel and joined the troops.

FATHER: You dumb woman, you! You confused me for a minute. Just because the wild boy wants to, do you think the Sultan will take him there and then? He is just a little boy, he can't use a sword or swing the scimitar. When the Sultan sees him, he'll laugh and say: "Come back when you grow up." Stop talking nonsense ignorant woman, go and hide the barley and the wheat, scatter the cattle, the plunder's begun. The Ottomans are here, get a move on woman, get a move on.

MOTHER: (AS SHE IS TAKEN AWAY BY THE FATHER) He won't, eh? My dear husband, he won't take my Osman away from me, eh, my beloved Sultan, eh? Osman is just a little babe yet. Our dear glorious Sultan, bless his Baghdad, won't take Osman with him, will he? What use is my snivelling Osman to him? Isn't that right, husband?

FATHER: Right, of course. What sort of soldier would a snivelling Osman make? You tell me. Come on now, let's go, get a move on.

(THEY EXIT. THE MILITARY BAND IS HEARD FROM THE DISTANCE. THE VILLAGERS COME IN WITH BAGS AND SACKS AND PILE THEM IN A CORNER. THEY LOOK DEFEATED. AFTER A WHILE, THEY START WORKING. AS THE MUSIC FADES AWAY, THE SERGEANT STARTS CARRYING THE BAGS AND THE SACKS OFF-STAGE. THE MUSIC GOES UP AGAIN AND THE SERGEANT ENTERS.)

SERGEANT: Peace be with you fellows.

PEASANTS: Peace be with you sergeant.

SERGEANT: May you have it easy, may you have a lot.

PEASANTS: Welcome sergeant, welcome Sir, may you live long.

SERGEANT: (TO OSMAN'S FATHER) Is this little boy yours, old man?

FATHER: With God's mercy, yes Sir, he is mine, thank you Sir, may you live long.

SERGEANT: Look here old man, our sovereign Sultan Murat wants this son of yours by his side.

FATHER: Anything for our sovereign Sultan, but why, I wonder, he wants this young boy? Has he been at fault? Our Sultan is all forgiving. Won't he forgive Osman's errors? Osman is ignorant and so young. I beg you for our Sultan to forgive him.

SERGEANT: Don't fear, no, he has made no error. Our Sultan is very pleased with him.

FATHER: Forgive me Sir, but how come our sovereign Sultan knows this poor little boy of mine?

SERGEANT: He knows all his subjects. This young Osman of yours wants to come to Baghdad, give his services to the Sultan. And his Majesty has allowed it and said: "Let him join my troops, show his subjection. Let him demonstrate how brave he is, how his sword can decimate the enemy." It's time now, say your farewells.

(THE MOTHER COLLAPSES AND STARTS SWAYING FROM SIDE TO SIDE.)

FATHER: The Sultan's wish is my command, I'd lay down my life for him. But my little one is only a child, how is he to know to battle? **(PAUSE)** If the Sultan says he's to go, he's to go. **(HUGS OSMAN WITH PRIDE. SILENCE.)**

SERGEANT: Move on, novice. Let's go get your uniform and your horse.

(OSMAN KISSES HIS MOTHER'S HAND, HUGS THE VILLAGERS, AND AS HE FOLLOWS THE SERGEANT)

FATHER: Sir, my good Sir!

SERGEANT: What is it?

FATHER: Sir, what I mean to say... Please let our beloved Sultan bring back this young Osman of mine. Pray you Sir, please ask this of our Sultan.

SERGEANT: We'll see how the wheels of fortune turn. **(HE EXITS WITH OSMAN. ALL STAND STILL. THE MILITARY BAND STARTS PLAYING. AS IT FADES AWAY, THE VILLAGERS ARE QUIET.)**

MOTHER: And you said he wouldn't, that damned Sultan of yours, that he wouldn't take my Osman away. You dupe! He has, he has taken him away... Our beloved Sultan, let him be entombed, has taken him away.

FATHER: Shut up woman, he is the Sultan. What can we do, we are all his subjects. He can take away our souls if he so wishes.

PEASANTS: he can, he can.

FATHER: He is the Sultan, after all.

MOTHER: He can take away our souls if he so wishes, eh? You mean, he can take your wife under him, if he so wishes, eh?

FATHER: What kind of talk is that, woman? You must be out of your tiny mind.

(THE MOTHER COLLAPSES, THE VILLAGERS APPROACH HER.)

I. PEASANT: You stop worrying about it, sister.

II. PEASANT: Our Osman is brave, God willing...

IV. PEASANT: Once he swings the scimitar...

V. PEASANT: Pity who goes near him...

IV. PEASANT: Pity, and what pity...

III. PEASANT: Opens the gates of Baghdad, young Osman.

IV. PEASANT: Opens and welcomes the Sultan.

I. PEASANT: Don't you worry about him, sister.

II. PEASANT: He'll be a favourite with the Sultan.

V. PEASANT: Then, there'd be no stopping him.

II. PEASANT: You tell me, didn't he himself ask for our Osman?

III. PEASANT: He's already a favourite.

IV. PEASANT: Swear to God.

III. PEASANT: I wonder if he'll make Osman the Governor of Baghdad?

IV. PEASANT: Or put him in charge of Damascus?

V. PEASANT: Or a vizier in Istanbul, God only knows.

MOTHER: (STILL STARING AT THE DIRECTION OSMAN HAD LEFT.) God! **(LIGHTS AND THE MILITARY MUSIC FADE OUT. THE MOTHER WAITS. LIGHTS.)**

THE CRIER: Baghdad is captured. Captured, I tell you. The Ottomans tore away Baghdad from the clutches of the Persian king. Such a fight the Ottomans have put up... Never seen before. **(THE VILLAGERS ENCIRCLE HIM, UNINTERESTED, JUST WAITING.)** And such a tough fortress to capture, Baghdad was, famed is the fortress of Baghdad

III. PEASANT: The fortress of Baghdad.

IV. PEASANT: Tough, real tough.

THE CRIER: Not for the Ottomans though. Castles crumble before the Ottomans' might. Swords whiz, scimitars swing and heads scatter flying in the air. And what blood... A river, no, a flood of blood covering the fields. It had to be seen...

II. PEASANT: Flows like a river...

V. PEASANT: And what blood...

THE CRIER: What fortress can withstand the Ottomans. The fortress of Baghdad is as tough as they come. But it crumbled. Heads fall, walls collapse and the royal holy flag flies from the fortress towers, just to please our beloved Sultan.

PEASANTS: Hurray!

THE CRIER: Hurray of course hurray! My word, the Ottomans had enormous spoils.

I. PEASANT: Enormous, eh?

PEASANTS: My word.

THE CRIER: The fair maidens of Baghdad are fairer than angels. Can't be described.

I. PEASANT: Fairer than angels...

THE CRIER: Angels are no match... Their hard fresh calves, as thick as my waist, cheeks glowing like roses.

PEASANTS: Don't say!

THE CRIER: Can't be described. They share those angels, those beauties among themselves, the Ottoman viziers and the pashas. You may say a hundred angles, I'll say seventy beauties. And the boys of Baghdad, so handsome you'd be scared to hurt them just looking.

V. PEASANT: Scared, eh?

THE CRIER: The Sultan gathers all the handsome boys, takes the lot to Istanbul.

III. PEASANT: Good on our Sultan.

THE CRIER: Of course, good on him. Our Sultan, with his strong wrist, unfearing eyes, brave and valiant, deserves the angels, the beauties, the handsome boys. The viziers and the pashas do, too.

PEASANTS: They do, they do.

THE CRIER: Not to mention the date groves, the white wheat, and jars and jars full of gold.
The viziers and the pashas collect it all, and straight to Istanbul.

PEASANTS: Straight to Istanbul.

THE CRIER: No fortress is too strong for the Ottomans.

II. PEASANT: Too strong, my word.

FATHER: What about my Osman?

II. PEASANT: Will the Ottoman army pass through here?

III. PEASANT: I wonder how young Osman fared?

THE CRIER: (TAKEN ABACK A BIT) How he fared?... You'd be surprised how he fared...
The brave men mothers bring to this world...

PEASANTS: Tell us how he fared.

THE CRIER: More a lion's cub than a man... In one instance... He totally scattered the Persian army... They went flying like fluffs of cotton. The Persian army... You may say ten thousand men, I'll say forty thousand. But... What valiant young men mothers bear... He went straight into the enemy lines and didn't come out with less than a thousand heads. I'll say twenty, you may say forty days... Forty days he fought.

FATHER: (IMPATIENT) Tell me if my Osman's coming back, will you?

THE CRIER: All Ottomans are coming back. Istanbul has never seen such a glorious parade before... I'll go and give the news to the rest of the folk. I'll see you later.
(AS HE IS ABOUT TO EXIT, THE PEASANTS AND THE FATHER LOOK WORRIED.)

FATHER: Sir, you didn't say. You didn't say if my Osman's coming back.

THE CRIER: All Ottomans are coming back in glory. See you later. **(EXITS. THE FATHER LOOKS AT THE PEASANTS, THEY LOOK AWAY. THEY FORCE THEMSELVES TO CONSOLE HIM.)**

I. PEASANT: Of course Osman will come back.

II. PEASANT: Soon he'll come back, our valiant young Osman.

III. PEASANT: Our brave young Osman.

II. PEASANT: Handsome young Osman.

I. PEASANT: He must have grown up by now.

(THE FATHER KNEELS ON THE GROUND IN DESPERATION. THE PEASANTS BOW THEIR HEADS. THE MILITARY BAND IS HEARD FROM THE DISTANCE. THE MOTHER ENTERS. THE SOUND OF THE MILITARY BAND FADES AWAY. THE MOTHER MOVES OUT OF THE CROWD. THEY ALL FOLLOW THE OTTOMAN ARMY WITH THEIR EYES. THE OTTOMAN ARMY DISAPPEARS AND THE BRASH AND PATRIOTIC VERSION OF THE SONG "YOUNG OSMAN" IS HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND, MIXING WITH THE PEASANTS' VERSION OF IT.)

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