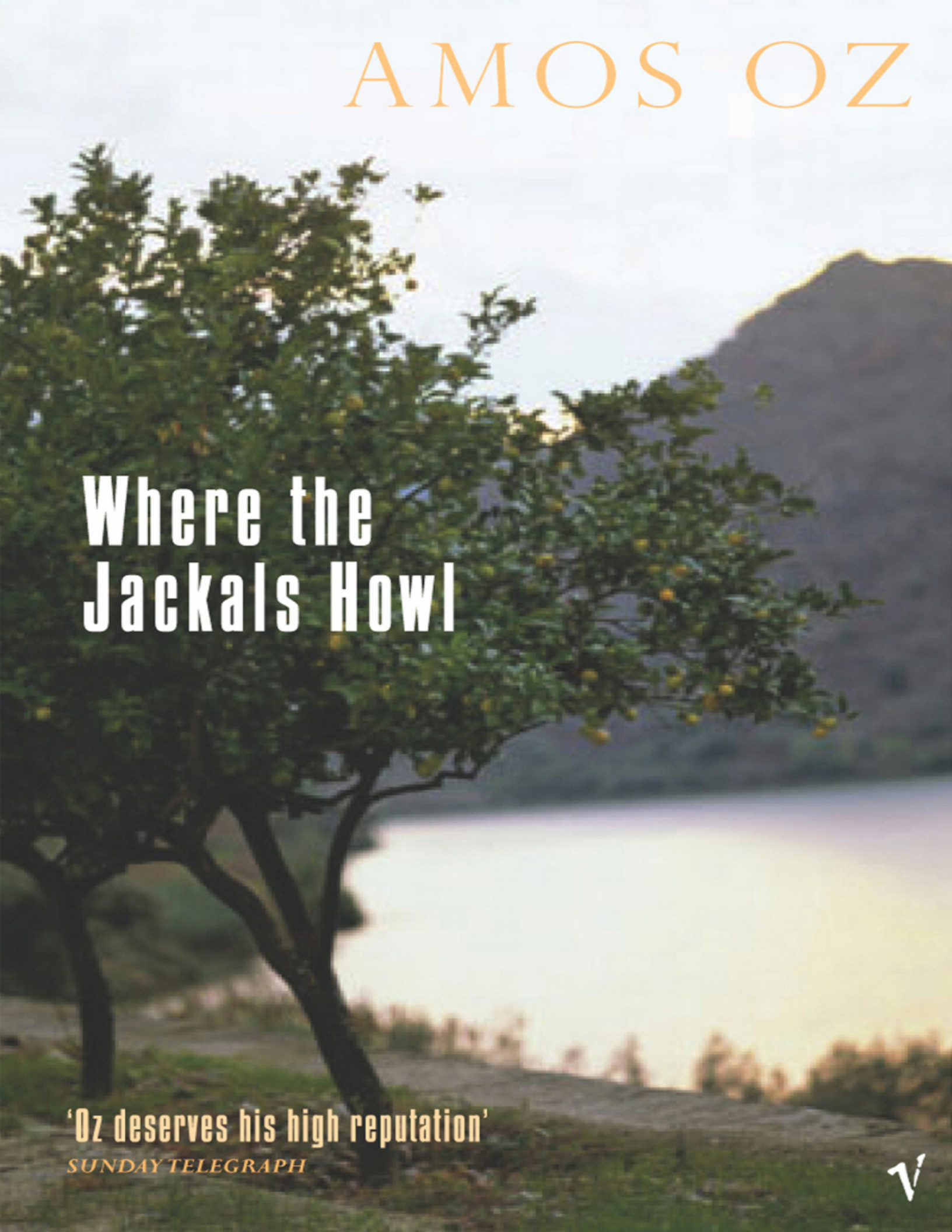
AMOS OZ



Where the Jackals Howl

'Oz deserves his high reputation'
SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Contents

About the Book

Where the Jackals Howl is prize-winning author Amos Oz's first collection of stories. On publication it received immediate critical acclaim and revealed Oz to be a master craftsman probing the emotional depths of his characters. The lives of ordinary Israelis are set against the backdrop of community life in a Kibbutz. The fate of these individuals, their drives, ambitions and idiosyncrasies, are grounded by the physical and social structure of their community as Oz portrays their world as a microcosm of the wider world.

About the Author

Born in Jerusalem in 1939, Amos Oz is the internationally acclaimed author of many novels and essay collections, translated into thirty languages. His novels include *My Michael, Black Box, To Know a Woman* and *The Same Sea*. His most recent book is *A Tale of Love and Darkness.* He has received several international awards, including the Prix Fémina, the Israel Prize and the Frankfurt Peace Prize. He lectures at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev. He is married with two daughters and a son, and lives in Arad, Israel.

ALSO BY AMOS OZ

Fiction

My Michael
Elsewhere, Perhaps
Touch the Water, Touch the Wind
Unto Death
The Hill of Evil Counsel
Where the Jackals Howl
A Perfect Peace
Black Box
To Know a Woman
Fima
Don't Call It Night
Panther in the Basement
The Same Sea

Non-Fiction

In the Land of Israel
The Slopes of Lebanon
Under this Blazing Light
Israel, Palestine & Peace
Help Us To Divorce
A Tale of Love and Darkness

For Children

Soumchi

TO NILY

‘Nomad and Viper’, ‘The Way of the Wind’, ‘A Hollow Stone’ and ‘Upon This Evil Earth’ were translated by Nicholas de Lange. The other stories were translated by Philip Simpson.

The translations are based on a revised edition published 1976 in Hebrew. The dates given at the end of each story refer to the year when they were first written. The author has since revised them extensively.

Where the Jackals Howl

and other stories

Amos Oz

Translated from the Hebrew by
Nicholas de Lange and Philip Simpson

Where the Jackals Howl

1

AT LAST THE heat wave abated.

A blast of wind from the sea pierced the massive density of the *khamsin,* opening up cracks to let in the cold. First came light, hesitant breezes, and the tops of the cypresses shuddered lasciviously, as if a current had passed through them, rising from the roots and shaking the trunk.

Toward evening the wind freshened from the west. The *khamsin* fled eastward, from the coastal plain to the Judean hills and from the Judean hills to the rift of Jericho, from there to the deserts of the scorpion that lie to the east of Jordan. It seemed that we had seen the last *khamsin.* Autumn was drawing near.

Yelling stridently, the children of the kibbutz came streaming out onto the lawns. Their parents carried deck chairs from the verandas to the gardens. “It is the exception that proves the rule,” Sashka is fond of saying. This time it was Sashka who made himself the exception, sitting alone in his room and adding a new chapter to his book about problems facing the kibbutz in times of change.

Sashka is one of the founders of our kibbutz and an active, prominent member. Squarely built, florid and bespectacled, with a handsome and sensitive face and an expression of fatherly assurance. A man of bustling energy. So fresh was the evening breeze passing through the room that he was obliged to lay a heavy ashtray on a pile of rebellious papers. A spirited straightforwardness animated him, giving a trim edge to his sentences. Changing times, said Sashka to

himself, changing times require changing ideas. Above all, let us not mark time, let us not turn back upon ourselves, let us be vigorous and alert.

The walls of the houses, the tin roofs of the huts, the stack of steel pipes beside the smithy, all began to exhale the heat accumulated in them during the days of the *khamsin*.

Galila, daughter of Sashka and Tanya, stood under the cold shower, her hands clasped behind her neck, her elbows pushed back. It was dark in the shower room. Even the blond hair lying wet and heavy on her shoulders looked dark. If there was a big mirror here, I could stand in front of it and look myself over. Slowly, calmly. Like watching the sea wind that's blowing outside.

But the cubicle was small, like a square cell, and there was no big mirror, nor could there have been. So her movements were hasty and irritable. Impatiently she dried herself and put on clean clothes. What does Matityahu Damkov want of me? He asked me to go to his room after supper. When we were children we used to love watching him and his horses. But to waste the evening in some sweaty bachelor's room, that's asking too much. True, he did promise to give me some paints from abroad. On the other hand, the evening is short and we don't have any other free time. We are working girls.

How awkward and confused Matityahu Damkov looked when he stopped me on the path and told me I should come to his room after supper. And that hand in the air, waving, gesticulating, trying to pluck words out of the hot wind, gasping like a fish out of water, not finding the words he was looking for. "This evening. Worth your while to drop in for a few minutes," he said. "Just wait and see, it will be interesting. Just for a while. And quite . . . er . . . important. You won't regret it. Real canvases and the kind of paints professional artists use, as well. Actually, I got all these things from my cousin Leon who lives in South America. I don't need paints or canvases. I . . . er . . . and there's a

pattern as well. It’s all for you, just make sure that you come.”

As she remembered these words, Galila was filled with nausea and amusement. She thought of the fascinating ugliness of Matityahu Damkov, who had chosen to order canvases and paints for her. Well, I suppose I should go along and see what happens and discover why I am the one. But I won’t stay in his room more than five minutes.

2

In the mountains the sunset is sudden and decisive. Our kibbutz lies on the plain, and the plain reduces the sunset, lessens its impact. Slowly, like a tired bird of passage, darkness descends on the land surface. First to grow dark are the barns and the windowless storerooms. The coming of the darkness does not hurt them, for it has never really left them. Next it is the turn of the houses. A timer sets the generator in motion. Its throbbing echoes down the slope like a beating heart, a distant drum. Veins of electricity awake into life and a hidden current passes through our thin walls. At that moment the lights spring up in all the windows of the veterans’ quarters. The metal fittings on the top of the water tower catch the fading rays of daylight, hold them for a long moment. Last to be hidden in the darkness is the iron rod of the lightning conductor on the summit of the tower.

The old people of the kibbutz are still at rest in their deck chairs. They are like lifeless objects, allowing the darkness to cover them and offering no resistance.

Shortly before seven o’clock the kibbutz begins to stir, a slow movement toward the dining hall. Some are discussing what has happened today, others discuss what is to be done tomorrow, and there are a few who are silent. It is time for Matityahu Damkov to emerge from his lair and become a

part of society. He locks the door of his room, leaving behind him the sterile silence, and goes to join the bustling life of the dining hall.

3

Matityahu Damkov is a small man, thin and dark, all bone and sinew. His eyes are narrow and sunken, his cheekbones slightly curved, an expression of “I told you so” is fixed upon his face. He joined our kibbutz immediately after World War II. Originally he was from Bulgaria. Where he has been and what he has done, Damkov does not tell. And we do not demand chapter and verse. However, we know that he has spent some time in South America. He has a mustache as well.

Matityahu Damkov’s body is a cunning piece of craftsmanship. His torso is lean, boyish, strong, almost unnaturally agile. What impression does such a body make on women? In men it arouses a sense of nervous discomfort.

His left hand shows a thumb and a little finger. Between them is an empty space. “In time of war,” says Matityahu Damkov, “men have suffered greater losses than three fingers.”

In the daytime he works in the smithy, stripped to the waist and gleaming with sweat, muscles dancing beneath the taut skin like steel springs. He solders together metal fittings, welds pipes, hammers out bent tools, beats worn-out implements into scrap metal. His right hand or his left, each by itself is strong enough to lift the heavy sledgehammer and bring it down with controlled ferocity on the face of the unprotesting metal.

Many years ago Matityahu Damkov used to shoe the kibbutz horses, with fascinating skill. When he lived in Bulgaria it seems that his business was horsebreeding. Sometimes he would speak solemnly of some hazy

distinction between stud horses and work horses, and tell the children gathered around him that he and his partner or his cousin Leon used to raise the most valuable horses between the Danube and the Aegean.

Once the kibbutz stopped using horses, Matityahu Damkov's craftsmanship was forgotten. Some of the girls collected redundant horseshoes and used them to decorate their rooms. Only the children who used to watch the shoeing, only they remember sometimes. The skill. The pain. The intoxicating smell. The agility. Galila used to chew a lock of blond hair and stare at him from a distance with gray, wide-open eyes, her mother's eyes, not her father's.

She won't come.

I don't believe her promises.

She's afraid of me. She's as wary as her father and as clever as her mother. She won't come. And if she does come, I won't tell her. If I tell her, she won't believe me. She'll go and tell Sashka everything. Words achieve nothing. But here there are people and light: supper time.

On every table gleamed cutlery, steel jugs and trays of bread.

"This knife needs sharpening," Matityahu Damkov said to his neighbors at the table. He cut his onions and tomatoes into thin slices and sprinkled them with salt, vinegar and olive oil. "In the winter, when there's not so much work to be done, I shall sharpen all the dining-room knives and repair the gutter as well. In fact, the winter isn't so far away. This *khamsin* was the last, I think. So there it is. The winter will catch us this year before we're ready for it."

At the end of the dining room, next to the boiler room and the kitchen, a group of bony veterans, some bald, some white-haired, are gathered around an evening paper. The paper is taken apart and the sections passed around in turn to the readers who have "reserved" them. Meanwhile there are some who offer interpretations of their own and there

are others who stare at the pundits with the eyes of weary, good-humored old age. And there are those who listen in silence, with quiet sadness on their faces. These, according to Sashka, are the truest of the true. It is they who have endured the true suffering of the labor movement.

While the men are gathered around the paper discussing politics, the women are besieging the work organizer's table. Tanya is raising her voice in protest. Her face is wrinkled, her eyes harassed and weary. She is clutching a tin ashtray, beating it against the table to the rhythm of her complaints. She leans over the work sheets as if bending beneath the burden of injustice that has been laid or is about to be laid on her. Her hair is gray. Matityahu Damkov hears her voice but misses her words. Apparently the work organizer is trying to retreat with dignity in the face of Tanya's anger. And now she casually picks up the fruits of victory, straightens up and makes her way to Matityahu Damkov's table.

"Now it's your turn. You know I've got a lot of patience, but there are limits to everything. And if that lock isn't welded by ten o'clock tomorrow morning, I shall raise the roof. There is a limit, Matityahu Damkov. Well?"

The man contorted the muscles of his face so that his ugliness intensified and became repulsive beyond bearing, like a clown's mask, a nightmare figure.

"Really," he said mildly, "there's no need to get so excited. Your lock has been welded for days now, and you haven't come to collect it. Come tomorrow. Come whenever you like. There's no need to hurry me along."

"Hurry you? Me? Never in my life have I dared harass a working man. Forgive me. I'm sure you're not offended."

"I'm not offended," said Matityahu. "On the contrary. I'm an easygoing type. Good night to you."

With these words the business of the dining room is concluded. Time to go back to the room, to put on the light,

to sit on the bed and wait quietly. And what else do I need? Yes. Cigarettes. Matches. Ashtray.

4

The electric current pulses in twining veins and sheds a weary light upon everything: our little red-roofed houses, our gardens, the pitted concrete paths, the fences and the scrap iron, the silence. Dim, weak puddles of light. An elderly light.

Searchlights are mounted on wooden posts set out at regular intervals along the perimeter fence. These beacons strive to light up the fields and the valleys that stretch away to the foothills of the mountains. A small circle of plowed land is swamped by the lights on the fence. Beyond this circle lies the night and the silence. Autumn nights are not black. Not here. Our nights are gray. A gray radiance rising over the fields, the plantations, and the orchards. The orchards have already begun to turn yellow. The soft gray light embraces the treetops with great tenderness, blurring their sharp edges, bridging the gap between lifeless and living. It is the way of the night light to distort the appearance of inanimate things and to infuse them with life, cold and sinister, vibrant with venom. At the same time it slows down the living things of the night, softening their movements, disguising their elusive presence. Thus it is that we cannot see the jackals as they spring out from their hiding places. Inevitably we miss the sight of their soft noses sniffing the air, their paws gliding over the turf, scarcely touching the ground.

The dogs of the kibbutz, they alone understand this enchanted motion. That is why they howl at night in jealousy, menace, and rage. That is why they paw at the ground, straining at their chains till their necks are on the point of breaking.

An adult jackal would have kept clear of the trap. This one was a cub, sleek, soft, and bristling, and he was drawn to the smell of blood and flesh. True, it was not outright folly that led him into the trap. He simply followed the scent and glided to his destruction with careful, mincing steps. At times he stopped, feeling some obscure warning signal in his veins. Beside the snare he paused, froze where he stood, silent, as gray as the earth and as patient. He pricked up his ears in vague apprehension and heard not a sound. The smells got the better of him.

Was it really a matter of chance? It is commonly said that chance is blind; we say that chance peers out at us with a thousand eyes. The jackal was young, and if he felt the thousand eyes fixed upon him, he could not understand their meaning.

A wall of old, dusty cypresses surrounds the plantation. What is it, the hidden thread that joins the lifeless to the living? In despair, rage, and contortion we search for the end of this thread, biting lips till we draw blood, eyes contorted in frenzy. The jackals know this thread. Sensuous, pulsating currents are alive in it, flowing from body to body, being to being, vibration to vibration. And rest and peace are there.

At last the creature bowed his head and brought his nose close to the flesh of the bait. There was the smell of blood and the smell of sap. The tip of his muzzle was moist and twitching, his saliva was running, his hide bristling, his delicate sinews throbbed. Soft as a vapor, his paw approached the forbidden fruit.

Then came the moment of cold steel. With a metallic click, light and precise, the trap snapped shut.

The animal froze like stone. Perhaps he thought he could outwit the trap, pretending to be lifeless. No sound, no movement. For a long moment jackal and trap lay still, testing each other’s strength. Slowly, painfully, the living awoke and came back to life.

And silently the cypresses swayed, bowing and rising, bending and floating. He opened his muzzle wide, baring little teeth that dripped foam.

Suddenly despair seized him.

With a frantic leap he tried to tear himself free, to cheat the hangman.

Pain ripped through his body.

He lay flat upon the earth and panted.

Then the child opened his mouth and began to cry. The sound of his wailing rose and filled the night.

5

At this twilight hour our world is made up of circles within circles. On the outside is the circle of the autumn darkness, far from here, in the mountains and the great deserts. Sealed and enclosed within it is the circle of our night landscape, vineyards and orchards and plantations. A dim lake astir with whispering voices. Our lands betray us in the night. Now they are no longer familiar and submissive, criss-crossed with irrigation pipes and dirt tracks. Now our fields have gone over to the enemy’s camp. They send out to us waves of alien scents. At night we see them bristling in a miasma of threat and hostility and returning to their former state, as they were before we came to this place.

The inner circle, the circle of lights, keeps guard over our houses and over us, against the accumulated menace outside. But it is an ineffective wall, it cannot keep out the smells of the foe and his voices. At night the voices and the smells touch our skin like tooth and claw.

And inside, in the innermost circle of all, in the heart of our illuminated world, stands Sashka’s writing desk. The table lamp sheds a calm circle of brightness and banishes the shadows from the stacks of papers. The pen in his hand darts to and fro and the words take shape. “There is no

stand more noble than that of the few against the many,” Sashka is fond of saying. His daughter stares wide-eyed and curious at the face of Matityahu Damkov. You’re ugly and you’re not one of us. It’s good that you have no children and one day those dull mongoloid eyes will close and you’ll be dead. And you won’t leave behind anyone like you. I wish I wasn’t here, but before I go I want to know what it is you want of me and why you told me to come. It’s so stuffy in your room and there’s an old bachelor smell that’s like the smell of oil used for frying too many times.

“You may sit down,” said Matityahu from the shadows. The shabby stillness that filled the room deepened his voice and made it sound remote.

“I’m in a bit of a hurry.”

“There’ll be coffee as well. The real thing. From Brazil. My cousin Leon sends me coffee too, he seems to think a kibbutz is a kind of kolkhoz. A kolkhoz labor camp. A collective farm in Russia, that’s what a kolkhoz is.”

“Black without sugar for me, please,” said Galila, and these words surprised even her.

What is this ugly man doing to me? What does he want of me?

“You said you were going to show me some canvases, and some paints, didn’t you?”

“All in good time.”

“I didn’t expect you to go to the trouble of getting coffee and cakes, I thought I’d only be here for a moment.”

“You are fair,” the man said, breathing heavily, “you are fair-haired, but I’m not mistaken. There is doubt. There has to be. But it is so. What I mean is, you’ll drink your coffee, nice and slow, and I’ll give you a cigarette too, an American one, from Virginia. In the meantime, have a look at this box. The brushes. The special oil too. And the canvases. And all the tubes. It’s all for you. First of all drink. Take your time.”

“But I still don’t understand,” said Galila.

A man pacing about his room in an undershirt on a summer night is not a strange sight. But the monkeylike body of Matityahu Damkov set something stirring inside her. Panic seized her. She put down the coffee cup on the brass tray, jumped up from the chair and stood behind it, clutching the chair as if it were a barricade.

The transparent, frightened gesture delighted her host. He spoke patiently, almost mockingly:

“Just like your mother. I have something to tell you when the moment’s right, something that I’m positive you don’t know, about your mother’s wickedness.”

Now, at the scent of danger, Galila was filled with cold malice:

“You’re mad, Matityahu Damkov. Everybody says that you’re mad.”

There was tender austerity in her face, an expression both secretive and passionate.

“You’re mad, and get out of my way and let me pass. I want to get out of here. Yes. Now. Out of my way.”

The man retreated a little, still staring at her intently. Suddenly he sprang onto his bed and sat there, his back to the wall, and laughed a long, happy laugh.

“Steady, daughter, why all the haste? Steady. We’ve only just begun. Patience, Don’t get so excited. Don’t waste your energy.”

Galila hastily weighed up the two possibilities, the safe and the fascinating, and said:

“Please tell me what you want of me.”

“Actually,” said Matityahu Damkov, “actually, the kettle’s boiling again. Let’s take a short break and have some more coffee. You won’t deny, I’m sure, that you’ve never drunk coffee like this.”

“Without milk or sugar for me. I told you before.”

The smell of coffee drove away all other smells: a strong, sharp, pleasant smell, almost piercing. Galila watched Matityahu Damkov closely, observing his manners, the docile muscles beneath his string shirt, his sterile ugliness. When he spoke again, she clutched the cup tightly between her fingers and a momentary peace descended on her.

“If you like, I can tell you something in the meantime. About horses. About the farm that we used to have in Bulgaria, maybe fifty-seven kilometers from the port of Varna, a stud farm. It belonged to me and my cousin Leon. There were two branches that we specialized in: work horses and stud horses, in other words, castration and covering. Which would you like to hear about first?”

Galila relaxed, leaning back in the chair and crossing her legs, ready to hear a story. In her childhood she had always loved the moments before the start of a bedtime story.

“I remember,” she said, “how when we were children we used to come and watch you shoeing the horses. It was beautiful and strange and so . . . were you.”

“Preparing for successful mating,” said Matityahu, passing her a plate of crackers, “is a job for professionals. It takes expertise and intuition as well. First, the stallion must be kept in confinement for a long time. To drive him mad. It improves his seed. He’s kept apart from the mares for several months, from the stallions too. In his frustration he may even attack another male. Not every stallion is suitable for stud, perhaps one in a hundred. One stud horse to a hundred work horses. You need a lot of experience and keen observation to pick out the right horse. A stupid, unruly horse is the best. But it isn’t all that easy to find the most stupid horse.”

“Why must he be stupid?” asked Galila, swallowing spittle.

“It’s a question of madness. It isn’t always the biggest, most handsome stallion that produces the best foals. In fact a mediocre horse can be full of energy and have the right kind of nervous temperament. After the candidate had been

kept in confinement for a few months, we used to put wine in his trough, half a bottle. That was my cousin Leon’s idea. To get the horse a bit drunk. Then we’d fix it so he could take a look at the mares through the bars and get a whiff of their smell. Then he starts going mad. Butting like a bull. Rolling on his back and kicking his legs in the air. Scratching himself, rubbing himself, trying desperately to ejaculate. He screams and starts biting in all directions. When the stallion starts to bite, then we know that the time has come. We open the gate. The mare is waiting for him. And just for a moment, the stallion hesitates. Trembling and panting. Like a coiled spring.”

Galila winced, staring entranced at Matityahu Damkov’s lips.

“Yes,” she said.

“And then it happens. As if the law of gravity had suddenly been revoked. The stallion doesn’t run, he flies through the air. Like a cannon ball. Like a spring suddenly released. The mare bows and lowers her head and he thrusts into her, blow after blow. His eyes are full of blood. There’s not enough air for him to breathe and he gasps and chokes as if he’s dying. His mouth hangs open and he pours saliva and foam on her head. Suddenly he starts to roar and howl. Like a dog. Like a wolf. Writhing and screaming. In that moment there is no telling pleasure from pain. And mating is very much like castration.”

“Enough, Matityahu, for God’s sake, enough.”

“Now let’s relax. Or perhaps you’d like to hear how a horse is castrated?”

“Please, enough, no more,” Galila pleaded.

Slowly Matityahu raised his maimed hand. The compassion in his voice was strange, almost fatherly:

“Just like your mother. About that,” he said, “about the fingers and about castration as well, we’ll talk some other time. Enough now. Don’t be afraid now. Now we can rest and relax. I’ve got a drop of cognac somewhere. No? No.

Vermouth then. There’s vermouth too. Here’s to my cousin Leon. Drink. Relax. Enough.”

7

The cold light of the distant stars spreads a reddish crust upon the fields. In the last weeks of the summer the land has all been turned over. Now it stands ready for the winter sowing. Twisting dirt tracks cross the plain, here and there are the dark masses of plantations, fenced in by walls of cypress trees.

For the first time in many months our lands feel the first tentative fingers of the cold. The irrigation pipes, the taps, the metal fittings, they are the first to capitulate to any conqueror, summer’s heat or autumn’s chill. And now they are the first to surrender to the cool moisture.

In the past, forty years ago, the founders of the kibbutz entrenched themselves in this land, digging their pale fingernails into the earth. Some were fair-haired, like Sashka, others, like Tanya, were brazen and scowling. In the long, burning hours of the day they used to curse the earth scorched by the fires of the sun, curse it in despair, in anger, in longing for rivers and forests. But in the darkness, when night fell, they composed sweet love songs to the earth, forgetful of time and place. At night forgetfulness gave taste to life. In the angry darkness oblivion enfolded them in a mother’s embrace. “There,” they used to sing, not “Here.”

There in the land our fathers loved,
There all our hopes shall be fulfilled.
There we shall live and there a life
Of health and freedom we shall build. . . .

People like Sashka were forged in fury, in longing and in dedication. Matityahu Damkov, and the latter-day fugitives like him, know nothing of the longing that burns and the

dedication that draws blood from the lips. That is why they seek to break into the inner circle. They make advances to the women. They use words similar to ours. But theirs is a different sorrow, they do not belong to us, they are extras, on the outside, and so they shall be until the day they die.

The captive jackal cub was seized by weariness. The tip of his right paw was held fast in the teeth of the trap. He sprawled flat on the turf as if reconciled to his fate.

First he licked his fur, slowly, like a cat. Then he stretched out his neck and began licking the smooth, shining metal. As if lavishing warmth and love upon the silent foe. Love and hate, they both breed surrender. He threaded his free paw beneath the trap, groped slowly for the meat of the bait, withdrew the paw carefully and licked off the savor that had clung to it.

Finally, the others appeared.

Jackals, huge, emaciated, filthy and swollen-bellied. Some with running sores, others stinking of putrid carrion. One by one they came together from all their distant hiding places, summoned to the gruesome ritual. They formed themselves into a circle and fixed pitying eyes upon the captive innocent. Malicious joy striving hard to disguise itself as compassion, triumphant evil breaking through the mask of mourning. The unseen signal was given, the marauders of the night began slowly moving in a circle as in a dance, with mincing, gliding steps. When the excitement exploded into mirth the rhythm was shattered, the ritual broken, and the jackals cavorted madly like rabid dogs. Then the despairing voices rose into the night, sorrow and rage and envy and triumph, bestial laughter and a choking wail of supplication, angry, threatening, rising to a scream of terror and fading again into submission, lament, and silence.

After midnight they ceased. Perhaps the jackals despaired of their helpless child. Quietly they dispersed to their own sorrows. Night, the patient gatherer, took them up in his arms and wiped away all the traces.

8

Matityahu Damkov was enjoying the interlude. Nor did Galila try to hasten the course of events. It was night. The girl unfolded the canvases that Matityahu Damkov had received from his cousin Leon and examined the tubes of paint. It was good quality material, the type used by professionals. Until now she had painted on oiled sackcloth or cheap mass-produced canvases with paints borrowed from the kindergarten. She’s so young, thought Matityahu Damkov, she’s a little girl, slender and spoiled. I’m going to smash her to pieces. Slowly. For a moment he was tempted to tell her the truth outright, like a bolt from the blue, but he thought better of it. The night was slow.

In oblivion and delight, compulsively, Galila fingered the fine brush, lightly touching the orange paint, lightly stroking the canvas with the hairs of the brush, an unconscious caress, like fingertips on the hairs of the neck. Innocence flowed from her body to his, his body responded with waves of desire.

Afterward Galila lay without moving, as if asleep, on the oily, paint-splashed tiles, canvases and tubes of paint scattered about her. Matityahu lay back on his single bed, closed his eyes and summoned a dream.

At his bidding they come to him, quiet dreams and wild dreams. They come and play before him. This time he chose to summon the dream of the flood, one of the severest in his repertoire.

First to appear is a mass of ravines descending the mountain slopes, scores of teeming watercourses, crisscrossing and zigzagging.

In a flash the throngs of tiny people appear in the gullies. Like little black ants they swarm and trickle from their hiding places in the crevices of the mountain, sweeping down like a

cataract. Hordes of thin dark people streaming down the slopes, rolling like an avalanche of stone and plunging in a headlong torrent to the levels of the plain. Here they split into a thousand columns, racing westward in furious spate. Now they are so close that their shapes can be seen: a dark, disgusting, emaciated mass, crawling with lice and fleas, stinking. Hunger and hatred distort their faces. Their eyes blaze with madness. In full flood they swoop upon the fertile valleys, racing over the ruins of deserted villages without a moment's check. In their rush toward the sea they drag with them all that lies in their path, uprooting posts, ravaging fields, mowing down fences, trampling the gardens and stripping the orchards, pillaging homesteads, crawling through huts and stables, clambering over walls like demented apes, onward, westward, to the sands of the sea.

And suddenly you too are surrounded, besieged, paralyzed with fear. You see their eyes ablaze with primeval hatred, mouths hanging open, teeth yellow and rotten, curved daggers gleaming in their hands. They curse you in clipped tones, voices choking with rage or with dark desire. Now their hands are groping at your flesh. A knife and a scream. With the last spark of your life you extinguish the vision and almost breathe freely again.

"Come on," said Matityahu Damkov, shaking the girl with his right hand, while the maimed hand, his left, caressed her neck. "Come on. Let's get away from here. Tonight. In the morning. I shall save you. We'll run away together to South America, to my cousin Leon. I'll take care of you. I'll always take care of you."

"Leave me alone, don't touch me," she said.

He clasped her in a powerful and silent embrace.

"My father will kill you tomorrow. I told you to leave me alone."

"Your father will take care of you now and he'll always take care of you," Matityahu Damkov replied softly. He let