

Under the Stars

Written by

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Cast of Characters

Nazim: (48 year old, male) A poet and a socialist romantic who has spent much of his life in prison because of his beliefs. He is soft spoken and articulate and his manner makes anyone be charmed by him but this is unbeknownst to him.

Cahide: (Early/Mid 30's, female) An actress and the wife of wealthy businessman Ihsan. She is regarded for her beauty and as the most beautiful actress/woman in Turkey. She comes from humble beginnings and is confident and set on what she wants.

Ivan: (40-50, male) Russian man with a very stereotypical Russian accent. He is cold looking but warm which is atypical. He, like Nazim, has served many years in prison and the two men are very similar in their differences.

Scene #1

Scene: (We are in a room from the previous scene except now the room has been cleaned and one can see the full grandeur of the room. Beautiful carpet and couch and a beige ottoman in front of a throne like cream colored chair. Beautiful bookshelves with thick beautiful books of color, and a painting of the Galata tower. Finally, Cahide walks in and she is wearing a beautiful blue dress with high heel shoes. She, like the night before. sits on the couch and lights a cigarette and grabs a magazine. Finally Nazim bursts in.)

Cahide: *(In a worried tone as if she wants to tell him something very important) Nazim! (Looking at Cahide he is confused and worried as he has never seen her in this state) Sir Hikmet I..I have to tell you something (She sits down on the sofa and looks down on the floor, looking for words but nothing comes out due to anxiety and grief)...*

Nazim: *(understandingly, standing he walks over and sits next to her and puts an arm on her shoulder) Yes..Is there something the matter?*

Cahide: *(weeping and a bit over dramatic in tone) Oh, yesssss!*

Nazim: *(In a caring and comforting almost fatherly or brotherly tone of an elder) Why do you weep, tell me why do you let your beautiful eyes suffer? Tell me my dear, tell me what it is that makes you weep and I will see if I can be of some comfort to you.*

Cahide: *(now lightly sobbing, in between sobs) I don't understand. You are such a good man...Why would anybody want to hurt you?*

Nazim: *(poetically and in a courageous voice and talking to her as if she is a child, and unaware of the reality of the situation while trying to comfort) Hurt me, is that what you're worried about my child. Well do not fear, this old poet can protect himself. I may look weak but I am like a lion in an iron*

cage. My eyes may sparkle with anger but I never lose my dignity. I may be trapped and in a cage but trust me when I say they will never put a collar around my neck.

Cahide: *(Standing up, Pulling herself back together and talking in a calm voice after a few seconds of silence)* Nazim, they're going to take you away!

Nazim: *(Realizing the severity of the situation but also composed and calm in a defiant voice)* Who's going to take me away?!

Cahide: *(Rubbing her face and telling him the facts coldly but truthfully)* Two days from now you are going to get a letter saying you've been re-enlisted into the Navy—

Nazim: *(Standing up and slowly walking next to her while talking) Stubborn and humorous in tone)* But it's been thirty-years and what will be my use? I'm sure they don't want a 48 year old man fighting in the Navy. Why would it be a huge disadvantage, for I don't fight with my body, I fight with my words, I fight not with guns and sabers but with pen and paper, the most dangerous weapons of all.

Cahide: Nazim, please I am serious, if you care at all for yourself, please, oh please I beg you, listen to me. *(Nazim looks at her as a grown up now realizing that she is scared for good reason but he is extremely composed and unafraid)* In two days, you will be re-enlisted in the Navy and then while there you will be kidnapped and forced to join a chain gang in the outskirts of eastern Anatolia. *(There is silence, the smile fades away from Nazim, then there is silence, Nazim looks at the floor and Cahide looks at her hands quizzically, finally Nazim speaks, there is silence)*

Nazim: *(Slowly walks and sits down, hands on lap leaned forward, solemnly Questioning but non-confrontational)* How did you find this out?

Cahide: *(Walking away and speaking in the opposite direction, talking to the audience)* Ihsan told me yesterday. He heard a

couple of politicians talking about it yesterday at the house party. Then, he told me and now I am telling you.

Nazim: Well, Thank You, well..to be quite frank, I am confused. I mean I just got out of the prison in Bursa 14 months ago and now right as I am adjusting back to society they want to put me back in the cage.

Cahide: (*Still not facing him, nervous but composed*) What will you do?

Nazim: What do you mean?

Cahide: (*Turning around and walking towards him, In a serious and pleading voice*) Well you can't just stay, Nazim bey if they get you this time they are not going to let you go.

Nazim: (*Standing up and walking towards her and standing across, Understanding but determined and calm*) My dear sweet Cahide, I understand your concern for me, really I do, and I really appreciate it but I will never go on the run like a coward and you may call that arrogant. However, I didn't serve all of those years in jail just to run away the next time somebody tried to silence me. I love my country and I love my poetry and if people want to put me in a chain gang to prove my love for those things, then so be it.

Cahide: (*Moving away once again turned away*) Oh, please Nazim, you are smarter than this. I never knew you to be such an arrogant man.

Nazim: (*Walking closer also facing the audience, slowly Cahide begins walking back to the sofa*) Defensive but not in an arrogant or angry way but with personal righteousness and philosophy) Madam I am not arrogant, I have tried running away before. I have, but if you're not willing to fight or suffer for your country, then you don't love it. I, madam, will not be forced out of my country. (*Cahide sits*) And If I do become a slave in a chain gang in Turkey with no freedom, it is far better yet than to become a slave to a false sense of freedom.

Cahide: (*From sofa*) Oh, Nazim, you must not speak like that.

Nazim: (*In a rant but also in a calm and confident manner, teaching rather than arguing, still facing the audience but walking side to side*) Or what, or what. See, this is exactly what I mean. People everywhere want you to believe that you must have money to be free. Money isn't freedom. Everyone thinks you must have a big house to be free. A big house isn't freedom. It is just a big house. They want you to believe that owning a brand new automobile is freedom. That is not freedom. That is just an automobile. See, the thing I am saying is, we are all born free. It is not until later in life when we become chained onto a system that even the people who created it don't understand. We are all already free, yet we choose not to see it. Instead, we choose to bribe ourselves with the materials we buy and then try to convince ourselves that we are free because of our worldly possessions.

Cahide: (*Standing up and shaking her head*) If you talked like that in America they would sue you.

Nazim: (*Slowly turns around and looks at Cahide*) No, my dear they would hang me (*Silence, then after a while, slowly walking towards Cahide*). You know I love my country. I fought for its independence. I did not fight with a gun, I didn't go to the front lines, not because I was afraid but because my pen and paper were stronger than any gun and saber. My letters were faster than bullets and my sentences more hurtful than a bullet. (*He is now close next to Cahide*) They can silence or kill me but they will never get the satisfaction of me not loving what I fight for.

Cahide: (*In a pleading tone*) Please Nazim, at least think about Mehmed, your son. (*Nazim realizing he forgot about his son and turning and walking stage left head down*) Do you really want him to grow up knowing his father is dead or worse a slave in some chain gang breaking stone?

Nazim: (*Lifting head and speaking towards the audience*) You are right about that Cahide but, is he going to know his father as

some coward who was disowned by his country and ran away because he was too scared to fight for what he loved.

Cahide: Nazim bey you talk about fighting (*She pours a drink for herself*) yet you say you fight best with your pen and paper. Well, if you stay, I assure you from what Ihsan bey told me you will never "fight" again (*Nazim turns from the audience and starts slowly pacing towards Cahide*) I have some money for you, it should be enough to book a ship and go to some other country. Please I beg of you, if you really truly love your country, you will not let a talented Turkish man such as yourself go to waste just because of (*enunciate*)pride.

Nazim: (*Slowly sitting down and coming to an understanding*) Yes, I suppose, In fact, permit me to say that I was wrong and you were right.

Cahide: (*Sitting next to him grabbing his shoulders and pleading*) Oh please Nazim bey.

Nazim: (*Standing up and walking towards the audience, in realization and clarity*) No, no you are right, I must get away, I can not let them silence me. I will not let them silence me. However, I am... I can't just...(*struggling, Cahide stands up and starts slowly pacing towards Nazim*) my son Mehmed he was born only two months ago and well I love him (*sorrowful voice and solemn sad face*) I always thought I would get to teach him everything, you know teach him how to ride a bike, teach him how to write poems, teach him how to be a gentleman. However, it seems my own country has deprived me, even of that right which I so looked forward to. (*Cahide stands right behind to the left of Nazim*)

Cahide: (*Griefful*) I'm sorry Nazim, I wish I could prove that you are one of the greatest things to happen to Turkey.

Nazim: (*Turning around and standing across, he puts his arms on her shoulders*) Madam Cahide, "you wish you could help me", why you already have. Without you, I would have had no idea at all of what would have happened to me. (*Removes hands*) I only wish I

could show some sort of favor in return, however, I have nothing that matches the capacity of your favor.

Cahide: (*Walks over and picks up envelope from coffe table*) Tell me you will take this money (*Wraps the envelope of money around the scripts and scenarios that Nazim brought*). Please take it and I swear that alone will be a favor big enough to last me an entire lifetime.

Nazim: (*Slowly walks, there is silence for a moment, then he speaks when next to her in the couch area*) I will gratefully take your help and I thank you with the full extent of my heart. (*Grabs and takes the money, puts it in coat pocket*) (*Pacing forward slowly, to the front audience*) I guess there is only one place that I could go and that's Moscow. I hear that communism is not working as smoothly as intended but it is a work in progress.

Cahide: (*Standing and walking towards Nazim*) Nazim, if only I could prove to those greedy politicians who call themselves patriots what a great man you are.

Nazim: (*Turns around then turns back to audience*) Patriots. No my darling. True patriotism is not waving a flag or singing songs or hanging signs. It is suffering for your country. True patriotism is loving your country even when it doesn't love you back.

Cahide: That money should be enough for 5 boat tickets and then some. Oh, I only wish we had more time. More time to work together and for you to tell me more about yourself and more about your experiences and how you write such beautiful poems—

Nazim: (*Comically*) Well enough time in prison will draw more poetry from me

Cahide: (*A look*)

Nazim: (*Standing close now, speaking softly*) I thank you for everything tell Ihsan bey that I am forever grateful to him as well and I hope I see you again one day

Cahide: I hope so too (A look) See, you soon Nazim Hikmet bey

Cahide: See you soon (*Nazim looks and Cahide waves slowly with sadness once more*)

Nazim: (A pause) Soon. (He exits, *Lights Dim/scene transition*)

Nazim: (*Walks to the crib and sits next to it*), Talking to the sleeping baby) You know Mehmet, I love you and I wish we could have spent more time together but don't worry...you will see me again. (*Reminiscing, while picking the baby up and walking around the couch*) We were going to do so many things together you and I. Yet, maybe one day, I will get to teach you how to write poems. (*Gets up from chair and walks to front stage, slowly pacing from left to right*) People don't like me because of what I believe in and they don't like my poems because of what they stand for. One day Mehmet, my son, you will write poems better than me or paint or talk better than me, but all I ask is that you be better than me and most important of all, don't ever sacrifice the things you love for others but always remember to love what you do. I don't know when I am going to see you again, I hope soon but I also know it will be a long time so I wanted to give you this (*puts a wooden toy that looks like a lion on the table next to the cradle*). It is a lion uncaged, you see you are a lion so never let anybody cage you and, if they do, roar as loud and as proud as you can everyday.....I hope that you will miss me, of course, that could be hard since you won't remember me, but if you do happen to miss me one day on a rainy night, go outside and look at the stars, and just know that you are free. (*Nazim gets up and picks up his suitcase which has been sitting next to him, he gets up and moves up on stage where there is a ramp, here there is what looks like a dock with a ship, Nazim walks up to it and a man walks out of the ship and walks onto the dock to greet Nazim*)

Nazim: Hello are you Ivan the captain—

Ivan: (Coldly) Da.

Nazim: So, this is the boat my friend had told me about.... When do we depart?

Ivan: We should be good to go in a couple minutes, but tell me comrade, why in the name of God, must you go to Russia?

Nazim: (*Interrupts*) I wrote a poem (*Ivan is laughing hysterically, In between laughter*)

Ivan: No, no, I do not laugh because I do not believe you. I laugh because I understand what you say

Nazim: (*There is a mutual silence*) The sky is beautiful tonight, isn't it and the stars? (*Relieved and softly*) It almost makes you feel free

Ivan: (*Assuringly*) Comrade

Nazim: Yes, Ivan

Ivan: You are already free, you just don't know it. (*Curtain*)

The End