

GANI JAMALZADA

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A NOVEL
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THE QUARRY

A NOVEL

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“Contemporary Azerbaijani Prose in English”. The Project Manager would like
to hope sincerely that those who use this book can have a clearer view of the
Azerbaijani poetic mentality.

I remember that they were making children who were disobedient, feel afraid of his name in our neighborhood: If you don't obey, he will come and take you away. And we grew up with this fear. I haven't seen my hero known as Sani Absheroni after growing up, but one day, I realized that what I heard about him and knew about the people in conflict with him worried me. And I wrote all this story in order not to forget about the period of time, rich with the pictures of variety persons in the history of Absheron.¹

Let me tell that the story happened a long time ago, I do not guarantee the accuracy of what I am writing. Officials have also changed the name of the place where these events took place for several times, but it has been remained in the memories as the QUARRY.

Author

¹ Absheron, also spelled as Apsheron, is a rayon of Azerbaijan demarcated in 1963. Although it shares the same name as the Absheron Peninsula, the area covered by the rayon is not conterminous, being further west and mostly inland.

A decorative rectangular border with ornate, symmetrical floral and scrollwork patterns on all four sides, framing the title text.

THE QUARRY
(a novel)

The Ravils' "airport operation" was successful, now even a single carnation couldn't be loaded into the aircraft without their permission. All the shippers at the airport were their partners. However, "a thief in law" known as Sani Absheroniski in the criminal world suddenly put all his works incomplete, took the Ravils, went to Kursumoghlu's seaside garden house and became a stay-at-home man.

Since temperature fell down, there was nobody nearby, one couldn't see anyone. Sani didn't like the large rooms of the house and he was frightened from humidity leaking inside through the doors and windows at nights even to his bones. The place where one can live in was semi-basement of the garden house. It was both dry, and warm and also light enough. Kursumoghlu's gardener together with his wife were serving them and doing their cooking.

After several days, Asta Ravil¹ asked:

¹ Asta is a nickname of a person who is usually moving sluggishly

“Bro, you think that they’ll not find us here?”

He was one of the Baku tatars. Anyone looking at his round face with heavy kindness, corpulent body and sluggish manner couldn’t say that this man was a professional killer. He used to call Sani “brother” in a way like the Baku people. He never stood away from his jokes and even ended up murders merrily.

“It wouldn’t be bad if we take care for ourselves before being taken to “black world” – saying, Sani laughed.

“Though a thief’s house is prison, freedom is a sweet thing...”

Takhta Ravil¹ regretted:

“What a pity, man!”– he said. “But we arranged everything.”

Takhta Ravil was one of the Kazan tatars. He was a rancorous and hard-hearted person. He was crag and his shape cannot be distinguished from thin wood. Sani was addressed by “batka”.² They were speaking with a mixture of Russian, Azerbaijani and tatar words.

“In any case, we put flea on Malikajdar’s fur coat,” - saying, Asta growled his tongue. “We shared their profit from flowers.”

Takhta shook his hand:

¹ Takhta is a nickname of a person who looks like a wood, for instance, wooden face. It sometimes characterised the person’s dull, puzzled features

² A slang word for a “close friend”. Literally meaning is a “bigger brother”. Nowadays it is very common and is widely used in Bulgaria.

“It seems that the profit from flowers was not meant for us. “

Sani said decisively:

“No, I don’t accept, no matter where we are, our money will be given! The brigadier of the shippers is a trusted person.”

Asta rubbed his hands together:

“You’ll see, Malikajdar will soon kneel down.”

Sani didn’t agree:

“Malikajdar’s power is related with fish. You see, each time how many boats he throws into water! If we take it off his hands, we can place his back on the ground... “

Takhta said in a careless manner:

“You entrust him to us, batka!”

Sani who knew well the meaning of this saying shook his head:

“No! They’ll say that Sani Absheronski killed the prophet-kinsfolk. All Baku people will rise up and turn against us. Otherwise, it is not a difficult thing!” he said, then advised Takhta who wanted to tell something. “It’s better you pay attention to your eating, you are all skin and bone, ahead “black world” is waiting for us.”

It really was. One day, they took upon them. Sani’s eyes became obscure, he took the pistol grip under the table, but he was unhappy with the number of policemen, who gathered in the basement, he put the pistol aside and took a pickled cucumber from the table

and ate. Asta looked at policemen carelessly, raised the last glass without any hesitation and before drinking said with joking:

“My dear namesake, drink, such a blessing cannot be found always!”

Policeman put shackles on the group and took them to the prison. Here they were separated from each other.

Though the verdict of guilty caused Sani to laugh, he kept silent. They accused the offender of fraud who was famous for robbery, and murder. This made him think. The investigation did not take long. At each step of the investigator, one point was noticeable, and he was preparing documents merrily without going into the depths. Sani's sentence was not so heavy, totally imprisonment of two years was defined, but, surprisingly, he was not sent to the “black world” after the verdict and was sent back to prison.

There were three people other than him in the small cell where he was taken to. One of them was a former pickpocket, and the other two were persons who were away from the crime and accidentally went to prison, it was known from the first sight. The former pickpocket was almost dangling on to Sani. As he knew the rules of the prison by heart, he changed the cell arrangement. He placed Sani's bed away from the toilet and near the door,

put bed-sheet on it, and spread a light carpet under his feet which was unknown where he brought it from. The other two residents of the cell obeyed the thief's laws defined. The name of Sani Absheroni, the thief in law, who was famous with legends on his name inspired all dread.

The former pickpocket was a living encyclopedia. He knew almost all the events that happened in the criminal environment by heart, sitting here, he was informing everyone about black worlds. He used to find a common language with guards.

He asked Sani:

"Brother, didn't you know which black world they'll take you to?"

Sani responded reluctantly:

"Perhaps, Turshulu. They can send me only there by this sentence."

The pickpocket rasped his wounded face.

"Turshulu is a good place," - he said. "I was there two times. Its guards are also merciful, its "treasure" is also rich, Lotu¹ Fakhi is able to collect money."

Sani interrupted and threatened him:

"Don't speak dispersedly, tell me what you know frankly."

The pickpocket came to the point immediately:

¹ Nickname of a person, means fancy man; rogue, swindler, cheat, knave or old fox

“Now there is disorder.”

Sani asked curiously:

“With the management...?”

“No, there is a dissension between our brothers.”

From the words of pickpocket, Sani knew that prisoners were divided into three groups in the black world of Turshulu. There are two groups of enemies and the third group is neutral. No one can prevent the collision which overstepped the limits. After receiving this information, Sani understood the reason for being sent to prison though approximately.

The next morning, the Ravils also joined to their cameras. Their partners were also accused with similar sentences. The arrival of the Ravils made Sani happy. As soon as they all gathered around the tea-table, which was arranged for them, the head of the guard was seen in the window on the iron door of the cell.

“Sani, brother, the chief wants to see you.

When Sani wanted to get up from the bed, the former pickpocket said in a low voice:

“According to the rules of prison, thieves are not allowed to talk to the chief privately “

Instead of Sani, Asta Ravil answered:

“We still at jail, not in the black world.”

The former pickpocket didn't turned away from his stubbornness.

"You have already been sentenced!" he said. "No matter where you are held, you are in prison."

"Shut up! He is so clever!" said Takhta Ravil and got angry for the former pickpocket.

Sani ended the dispute:

"Our pickpocket brother is right," he said, then made his bed comfortable again.

He hadn't violated the unwritten rules of the criminal environment. Now, he didn't go to the call of the chief alone. He asked the guard:

"How many persons may I take with me?"

"It's up to you, brother."

Sani said jokingly:

"There are five persons other than me in the cell. Shall I take all of them?"

The guard said respectfully:

"It seems to me that two persons are enough".

Sani got up, and said to the Ravils.

"You'll go with me."

The Ravils joined him silently. All three left the cell from the iron door which was opening with clanging under attentive glaze of the cell peers.

The chief of the jail was not at his office. Sani immediately knew the person in civilian clothes at his large office. He was the famous chief of the correctional

and labor institute “Turshulu”. Though he was colonel in rank, he behaved like a general. He liked to be in civilian clothes before prisoners.

He sat at the chair. He looked at the Ravils disrespectfully, showed a sit for them in the corner and the opposite place to Sani. Three guards were in the manner of “Stand up straight, hands behind their back.” The chief kindly said:

“I’ll try to be short; we have a work for you to do. I don’t know what will be tomorrow, but today we need your help.

Sani said carefully:

“I am listening to you”.

“There is a dissension between prisoners in the black world of Turshulu; there are dead persons as a result of conflict. You should help us!

“And can I ask you why me?”

The colonel efficiently said:

“First, you have a power in all the black worlds, you are the authority!”

Sani respectfully responded:

“Thank you for appreciating me. However, there is Lotu Fakhi in the black world of Turshulu. He is more powerful than me. He...”

The colonel interrupted him:

“We need you!” – he said. “You were prisoner at Turshulu for several times. You know the leaders of

groups well, some of them are your former helpmates. And also, it is known from your biography that one of your parents is an Azerbaijani and another one is Armenian."

"Is it a national confrontation?"

"Yes, the conflict appeared between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. Both sides consider you their own.

"But what is the reason for the conflict?"

The colonel expressed that he was uninformed about that.

"Who knows! "– he said."" "Those who are neutral say that the conflict in the black world was started by a foreign Armenian. In fact, the conflict appeared between prisoners after his arrival."

"Is that foreign Armenian there?"

"No, he was transferred to the other black world."

The colonel couldn't tolerate Sani's questions more, when the prisoner wanted to say something, he interrupted his words impatiently and asked:

"Are you ready for helping us or not?"

Sani shook his head.

"You know that the thief cannot be at one with the chiefs of prison. I can't be against my brothers," he said.

"Is it your last word?"

Sani breathed deeply:

"Yes, the last one!" he said and pointed to the Ravils.

As soon as the colonel noticed the point, he said to the guards standing at the door:

"Took all three to the cells for single person. It seems that it is impossible to make them understand with words."

Not long, the Ravils returned to the cell. They "kicked" them heavily. The pickpocket was in panic.

"Oh!" he said. "And where is Sani? "

Takhta sighed in pain and said:

"Perhaps, he is still being kicked..."

"Why did they kick you?"

Takhta briefly gave an explanation. And the pickpocket grumbled.

"Sani ought to agree."

Asta, who started feeling himself better, hissed:

"Don't waste your breath, Sani knows what he is doing."

The pickpocket arrogantly said:

"It seems that he doesn't know!"

Takhta said in a threatening manner:

"You can't understand! Understood?"

As Asta knew rules a little, he said:

"Pickpocket, if it is not asked by both sides, Sani can not take part in this confrontation. You know that if he acts according to the words of the prison's chief, they'll say that he is betrayer."

Pickpocket rasped his face and asked:

“So, is it needed a request of both sides?”

Asta shook his head.

“Yes, sure, both sides!”

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It was the Fall of 1987. The days were cold and pale. Recently, Malikajdar’s anxious mood hadn’t become good. The herbs made by Shakil Gochu¹ who was wandering around him like a doctor didn’t help him. As usual, Seyfal, who was sitting on the left side of Malikajdar said:

“Songulu wants us to take him under our guardianship, Aga.”

Malikajdar taking the rosary from the velvet bag turned to Seyfal, asked:

“You think, Songulu is being afraid of?”

Seyfal was pleased of the talk that directed to business and immediately confirmed:

“He is not only afraid of, but also shivering”.

Malikajdar said ironically:

“You need to tell him that Sani Absheroni is in prison now, no need to be feared.”

Seyfal smiled.

¹ Nickname of a person, means ruffian, hooligan; chieftain

“Yes, I told. He said that he didn’t want to be alone at his age.”

As soon as the name of Sani was heard, Shakil Gochu sitting a little away from them, smacked his lips, opened his eyes and with half sleep voice said:

“You ought to kill Nazioghlu Sani!”

Then he closed his eyes again.

Malikajdar looked at the old man kindly, but said decisively:

“I have come of the prophet stock, I am not murderer. “

Shakil Gochu said in a complaining voice:

“I want to see the day when Nazioghlu Gulu be uprooted, pulled up by roots, Aga! I don’t want to leave this world unfortunately...”

Shakil Gochu who lived a life sufficiently was breathing only with the past and wasn’t interested in today’s life. Everything was in a mess in his cloudy brain. Malikajdar was not against him, and he kept silence.

Seyfal asked repeatedly:

“Aga, what should I say to Songulu?”

“Let him wait,” Malikajdar responded thoughtfully. “When the time is right, I will find him myself.”

Seyfal didn’t agree and said:

“Aga, it is high time. Songulu is a rude man; we can defeat him while he is in fear. But when his fear passes away, he’ll disappear.”

“I don’t need those who is begging in fear! “Malikajdar shook his head, then added: “You think, I should take under my guardianship all those cowards?”

Seyfal said:

“It is not difficult to build a hen-house for chickens with golden eggs!”

Malikajdar frowned. He said:

“You know better that I don’t expect anything from guardianship. I only want people to be faithful and loyal to me, nothing else. It’s always been that way. And will always be so.’

Mizi who was sitting in front of them cleared his throat, said:

“Aga, it is a very knotty question!”

Malikajdar didn’t understand.

“Don’t tell me a riddle!” he got angry. ““Explain, what do you mean?”

“Aga, recently, I hired some fresh men additionally for security. Sani’s arrest spoiled everything.” Mizi explained. “Now, I don’t know, what to do with those men; whether to keep or release them.”

Malikajdar thought for a while, then said:

“Let them stay! Usually, Sani’s arrest doesn’t take long.”

He rounded the rosary and asked in a calmed voice.” Did any of the guys come?”

Seyfal sighed deeply, said:

“Everybody came, they’re in the house, waiting long ago.”

Malikajdar ordered:

“Let Bij¹ Abdul come in.”

Bij Abdul entered the room. He sat at the table by the consent of Malikajdar. Malikajdar asked:

“How was the night?”

Bij Abdul said slowly:

“Not so bad, Aga,”

Then he put a large bunch of banknotes which he took from his chest under small mattress where Malikajdar was sitting and put the sheet of the copybook in front of him.” These are our costs.”

Malikajdar looked through the sheet and got surprised:

“How many fishing boats were there on the sea?”

“Four.”

“Why so few? “

“They said that the water would grow turbid, and I decided to act carefully, took experienced fishermen, but the weather didn’t change.”

“Then, you had plenty of hunting.”

“Yes, Aga. We caught a lot of fish at the sea. We couldn’t pull nets, we were in trouble until pulling them to the coast. God blessed us, the stream was towards

¹ Nickname of a person, means old fox, sly dog

the coast, we could come due to paddle, our hands got bruise''' Bij Abdul said and showed him his hands.

Malikajdar looked at his palms, shook his head.

"You'll not go to the sea anymore..."

"he said, then turned to Seyfal. "Call your brother."

As soon as Seyfal went outside, he immediately came back with his brother Sarraf.

It was several days that Sarraf got out of prison. Malikajdar's hard work was not in vein, though they sentenced Sarraf with an imprisonment of seven years for illegal fishing, he stayed in prison totally not for a year and gained his freedom.

Malikajdar called Sarraf to the table by point. Waiting him for arranging himself, he said to Bij Ajdar:

"From now on, Sarraf will be responsible for fishing. Take him and show the farming."

"All right, Aga!" Bij Abdul responded carefully. "Are you taking me away from sanctuary?"

"No, but from this day forward, you'll look after hothouses. Our masters who cultivate tomato and cucumber know their works, it'll not be difficult. Your duty is to control and distribute the product harvested to the markets."

The most valuable one among Mizi's children was his eldest son Abdul. The eyesore on his right eye gave slyness to his face. His nickname was the fruit of this sign.

Bij Abdul's eyes were smiled after Malikajdar's words. He asked:

"But what about Hambaloghlu Rahib?"

Malikajdar defined more exactly:

"Hambaloghlu Rahib will look after the business of flowers as previously, and you will be engaged in hot-houses"

Then he turned to Sarraf.

"You'll go with Bij Abdul and hand over boats and equipment. Now, wait for me in the balcony."

Sarraf quickly left the room like pressed bow was put under him. Malikajdar turned to Bij Abdul, asked:

"Did they stop you on the road when you took the fish?"

"No, Aga, who will stop the military car?"

"Did they send the car on time?"

"As soon as we called them! "

Malikajdar turned to Seyfal and said in a soft way:

"I've always enjoyed the general's precision! He is clearly fulfilling the tasks what he undertakes!"

Then he ordered Bij Abdul.

"When you go out, tell Rahib to come in."

Malikajdar allowed Hambaloghlu Rahib to approach him ten years ago. They don't have blood kinship between them.

It happened in this way.

A young boy came to Malikajdar who was working in the workers' supply at those times. After greeting he said that he was Razzag's son!

Malikajdar didn't understand at first.

"Who is Razzag, child?"

"Aga, I am the son of your friend, porter Razzag, did you remember?" he said. "And my name is Rahib."

The young man exaggerated a little. Razzag, one of the most poor and helpless creatures of God, was not Malikajdar's friend, but his military companion. He grew up at the orphanage together with Sani. Though he had a share in several robbery, he could somehow save his life from a just punishment because of his helplessness. And those lessons were enough for him, after military service, he started working as porter in order to run and save his life from Sani's group, acting in a stupid manner. And his partners who considered it a guilt to live at the expense of their hard work and labor turned their way away from him.

He searched and found Malikajdar after military service, didn't leave him anymore. He used to visit to Aga several times in a year coming to the village and speak about his works. He was living in semi – basement apartment in the centre of the city alone. Malikajdar felt

sorry for him and wanted to help him for not working as porter.

Razzag was frightened, he said to Malikajdar:

“Aga, it is better for me if I die working as a porter! If Sani knows that I deceived him, he’ll cut my throat!”.

Aga thought about marrying him, but Razzaq stepped aside:

“I am afraid of Sani!”

Malikajdar was only able to put a large quantity of money for current expenses in the pocket of his military companion. Though Razzag refused, he did so. Although his sudden death made Malikajdar feel upset, he became happy for his friend who got rid of the world’s torment and helped arranging funeral for him.

Malikajdar remembered all these said decisively:

“But have the deceased Razzag got married, and had a son?”

“Aga, I can show a document!” the young guy took his passport out.

Malikajdar’s mistrust did not pass even after looking at his document. He slowly said:

“My son, Razzag used to visit to me one or two times a year. We were remembering our old days. But he never said that he got married”.

“My father kept it secret that he had a child for his fear of Sani, when they saw me near him, he was saying that I was a neighbor’s child” Rahib quietly explained.

Malikajdar agreed.

"All right, your father was living in fear. For several times, I wanted to take him under my guardianship, give recommendations to him, show the way, but all in vain; your father was a man not listening to and following the advice. If he had said that he got married..."

"Maybe he was ashamed?" Rahib responded presumably.

"When the marriage was an act to feel ashamed?" Malikajdar didn't agree with him.

"Aga, if you knew whom my father got married, you wouldn't say so!" Rahib smiled sorrowfully. "Perhaps, as he knew that an innocent man like you wouldn't like the woman he married, he hid his marriage from you."

"I know, my friend had some strange features" Malikajdar didn't finish his opinion in order not to touch Rahib's heart.

Rahib appreciated that and said:

"Aga, my father's strange manners cannot be countable. He was taking all homeless persons and dogs and cats in the street to our house. And gave all his earnings for their meals. I've seen this from my childhood."

Malikajdar didn't hide his interest.

"And how it was that he married?" he asked.

Rahib told the story frankly.

"My father didn't like to speak about their marriage. I had heard from somewhere that there was a woman

wondering at Sabunchu station. She was begging, doing robbery, in fact, engaging in bad things... One day, my father found her behind the garbage cans. He saw that the woman was dying. He felt sorry for her and took her to the hospital. After some treatment, the woman felt better and recovered. My father, visiting and taking every blessing to her, saw that the woman had nowhere to go and took her to his house. He bought clothes for her, look after her, and then married to her. They had a child. So, it is how I was born."

Malikajdar Aga said in an impressed state:

"And then? "

As Rahib poured out, he continued with a feeling of relaxation:

"My father's happiness was not so long. The woman who gave birth to me, I didn't want to call her mother, got in the train when I was one with an excuse of visiting her relatives and she didn't come back. According to those said, my father didn't get tired of waiting for her at the station and his eyes always were on the trains. He didn't lose his hope. He always said to me that your mother was good, she would come wherever she was... Our neighbor Javahir was secretly saying to me that don't believe in your father, your mother was dissipated.

The fact that amazed Malikajdar was that Rahib was speaking about his father with the feeling of thirst and about her mother with disgust. He said:

"Now, it is clear, my son! But why I didn't see you at the funeral of your father?"

Rahib didn't hide his feeling.

"I was in prison, Aga!"

Malikajdar's forehead was wrinkled.

"I remember, in funeral yhey said that that Rezzag had someone. I didn't even realize then they were talking about his son.

Rahib, finally, came to the point:

"Aga, accept my gratitude for arranging my father's funeral. I'll not forget until my last day,"

He said and took and kissed his hand.

It was attempted in such a manner that Malikajdar couldn't prevent him. He pulled his hand out from his hand and in a dissatisfied manner said:

"Don't do like that again, my son! I was fulfilling my duty."

And Rahib without changing its decision said:

"So do I!"

This short sentence pleased Malikajdar in such a way that his dissatisfaction passed by.

"Now, tell me the truth, why have

been arrested?" "I came to such a conclusion from what you said that you are not a mischievous person. But what was the reason for your arrest?"

Rahib reminded the old days, and he said:

“Aga, once I took some meal to my father. Then, I was a small boy. One of the chiefs of the passenger car was angry for some reason. He slapped in the face of my father in front of my eyes. My father was enduring his insults for his sin, I don’t know. However, I didn’t forget this case. When I was seventeen, I heard that the same person again insulted my father. He was the chief of the station at that time. I went to my father’s workplace. I beat the chief of the station in front of all of his employees and shippers. When I heard his screaming, I became calm. For this action, I was sentenced an imprisonment of two years. Then, I went to the army for military service. When I was in prison, my father died. The man was breathing for me. My imprisonment brought his end. I ought to take his revenge in other way...”

“Your sorrow can be understood, my son,” Malikajdar responded. “I want to know one thing, really, your father didn’t talk to you about me?”

Rahib smiled:

“Aga, how not, he was speaking about you. So, almost, we had conversation about you every day. He was saying that Malikajdar Aga was a sacred man. He was saying that if the Aga’s friendship wasn’t, I would lose my belief in persons. Every time, he promised that he’d bring me to you, and I’d see how friend he had. However, he couldn’t fulfill his promise. My father grew up in the orphanage. He liked to speak about his life in the

orphanage. I learned that the Soviet government exiled citizens to Iran. My grandfather was also one of those who had been exiled to Iran. So my father who hoped for his ill grandmother was taken to the orphanage soon."

Malikajdar who became thoughtful from the old memories changed the topic:

"Now, tell me, how can I help you?" he asked.

Rahib didn't speak for a minute. Then, raised his head and sincerely said:

"Aga, I came here to serve you. I don't have any other relative than you."

Malikajdar said:

"Come to me, to the sanctuary in the evening, the day after tomorrow."

As his life has passed vigilantly, Seyfal called him and explained what he should do and saw him off the city. He gathered a little information about Rahib. He saw that those things said by Hambaloghlu are right and he didn't lie. Aga calmed a little.

Malikajdar Aga invited Rahib who came on the confirmed time to the summer house. They talked a little and drink tea. Then Seyfal took money enveloped out of his pocket and put it on the table in front of Rahib. Malikajdar said:

“Nephew, take this ten thousand. Come to me when you decide what activity you would like to carry out. Try not to spend your capital in vain.”

Rahib’s eyes shined from this action as he didn’t see so much money in his life. And he said surprisingly:

“Aga, it is too much”.

Malikajdar was impressed by his open-heartedness, said:

“Not much, my nephew! It’s totally ten thousand. Buy an old car. How can you earn money if you don’t have vehicle? You ought to get cleaned up, put on new clothes, so that those who will see you for the first time were not frightened. You’ll have little expenses such as meal, drink and you’ll not earn money immediately. You’ll see that ten thousand is not so much.”

Rahib said devotedly:

“Aga, I’ll return this money!”

His impressive voice which the reason was unknown even persuaded Seyfal who treated everyone with his tricks.

After seeing off Rahib, he said to Malikajdar:

“Aga, God sent him for us!”

Hambaloghlu Rahib was not like his father, he was as active as fire and flame. Soon, a large part of shopping belonging to Aga was in his hands. The establishment of

hothouses, soil treatment, grounding of the screwdriver, flower planting, crop harvesting, carton packaging to their sale in Russia were under the control of Rahib. He was here in one day and another day, in Moscow – Saint Petersburg; he was working without feeling tiredness. The hot houses were making so much profit that it couldn't be counted. Malikajdar was satisfied with his choice.

However, situation was changed for one or two months, the profit from flowers fell down. Malikajdar asked:

“My nephew, what”'s happened?”

During that eve, restrictions in the country were diminished, in a word, there was instability. A group of persons appeared in the airport took the control of flower transportation. It was not beneficial to import carnations with increased cost in Baku to Moscow.

Malikajdar, listened to Rahib's brief report, asked:

“Whom the shippers that you mentioned do answer to?”

Rahib answered:

“I don”'t know, Aga. They are not afraid of both police and the management of the airport. They demand twenty kopecks for each flower transported.”

Malikajdar listened to him and thought over the matter for a while. Rahib asked carefully:

“Aga, I wonder, who is supporting the shippers?”

Malikajdar took the rosary. There was silence in the room, everyone kept silent. Then, after a while, Malikajdar said:

“Probably, Sani is supporting the shippers.”

Seyfal expressed his doubt:

“No, he can’t, Aga. Sani makes money another way.”

Mizi shook his head, said:

“But Sani is in prison!”

Malikajdar didn’t say anything. Seyfal tried to explain his thoughts:

“Maybe after Sani, his helpmates became independent and break the rules...Is it possible?”.

Malikajdar rubbed his forehead.

“No, it is not. It is not Sani’s style, ” he said, then looked at Rahib who was waiting for the answer. “My nephew, what is your suggestion?”

Rahib took a list out of his pocket.

“Here’s the name of twentyfive or thirty floriculturists. They have sent me to you as an advocate. They said if Aga solves this matter, we’ll have good profit... If we earn five kopecks for each flower, even our wall will be by gold...”

Malikajdar attentively listened to him and shook his head.

“Nephew, I listened to your suggestion.’

Rahib asked hurriedly:

“What shall I say to floriculturists, Aga?”

Malikajdar answered disrespectfully:

“Don’t hurry up, soon you’ll know my decision. If you don’t have any other question, you can go,”

Waiting for Rahib to leave the room, he turned to Mizi.

“Where is Hatam Aga? Why he is absent?”

Hatam was the eldest son of Malikajdar. He was also Mizi’s son – in – law.

“He got in the car and drove away” said Mizi unwillingly.

“The security of the proper house and sanctuary and the kitchen was under Mizi’s control. Though he noticed every moment, he didn’t like to spy on his son – in - law. Seyfal couldn’t hide his feelings, hinted at his uncle:

“You have losen the rope of your son – in – law and that’s why, he is not breaking going to the circle of that lame teacher!”

-III-

It was the fifth anniversary of their marriage, but Hatam’s young family didn’t hear a child’s voice. Neither praying, nor medicines or quackery helped them! Doctors said that his wife was healthy. Though Hatam didn’t believe that the problem was related to him, he turned around the sacred place every day in a year. However, it didn’t have any way out, and he saw

Samaya who took her grandmother to the pilgrimage and fell in love with her. He again tried for himself, but achieved nothing, also he didn't leave Samaya.

Hatam's car left behind the winding streets, he stopped the car in front of the gate of the house, got out of the car and opened the gate, drove the vehicle inside; but didn't go upstairs, he passed to the neighbouring yard by a secret door which was covered by greenness. He entered inside with well-dressed woman waiting for him.

He had built this small house for his mistress. The entrance and exit of the yard were separate and opened to the neighboring street. Hatam also constructed a house for himself to be escaped here. A few persons knew about their relationship with Samaya. The actions taken by him were enough that his wife couldn't hear anything about the presence of that mistress.

Hatam fell in love with the beauty and figure of Samaya. His mistress was slender, she had a chest that killed people above the waist and a neck that revived a dead person. The contours of her beautiful face cohered with a marvelous accuracy.

Hatam directly moved to the bedroom. And asked Samaya who followed behind him.

"Well, what is the emergency that you sent for me a messenger?" without waiting for a response threatened her:

"If you called me out of nothing...I will punish you!"

Samaya didn't pay attention to his anger, approached him in a coquetry manner:

"Darling, I did not send a messenger in vain!" – she said. "I have the news for you, not one, but two important news..."

Hatam melted like a candle from the flirt of his mistress.

"So, tell me, what is the matter?"

"My Aga, I turned 25 already."

Hatam got surprised:

"Well, is it good news? Last month I celebrated celebrated your birthday with a small party, and gave you gifts. Maybe, you want anything else? Tell me, don't be ashamed, I'll buy them for your next birthdays.." he joked.

Samaya looked down the floor.

"I don't need anything anymore! You gave me all I wanted! May God protect you!"

Hatam asked insistently:

"Maybe, I have forgotten something? Tell me, don't be shy! The feed store of the Soviet government is sacrificed for your blue eyes."

Samaya growled:

"I went to the gynecologist..."

"Yes..."

“Well, Aga, I talked about my wish to the doctor...”

Hatam scowled:

“Will your ever lay off? You’re starting again. You’ve forgotten this long ago, why you remembered it?”

Samaya begged:

“I want to have a child, my dear...” then she added in a tricky way: “The doctor is a good woman, she examined me for several times. And she said that if you don’t give a birth now, you’ll be childless then.”

Hatam sighed.

“You think that I don’t want?”

He embraced her.” Don’t be bored, God gave the trouble and he will give the drug, too. “

Samaya changed the topic seeing Hatam’s sadness.

“But I have another important news for you!”

Hatam hinted at:

“How many important news can be per day? Maybe, you put it away for the next day?”

Samaya disappointed a little bit, said:

“That is not the postponed news. Gulu is ready to help you!”

Hatam became serious.

“But what does Kursum”s daughter want instead?”

Samaya shook her head.

“She doesn’t want much. She said if the protection of Malikajdar promised me when I’m in a bit of a tight spot, then she would tell them what she knew”

Hatam thought over the matter for a while, then said:
"She is lover of Sani for years. Would she sell us to him?"

"No, she is my mother"s friend from childhood. I know her very well. Agaoghlu, I trust Gulu."

"Ok, I will tel Aga' Hatam said." Let's see how he decides'

Then he asked her:

"How is your Maria Granny?"

Samaya taking off her clothes went to bed, said:

"She is well. And she is gartefull to Malikajdar Aga everyday!"

Hatam watched his lover"s pretty body, smiled:

"Probably my Aga and she must have had some kind of love stories....' The he advised his lover:

"You better take your Grannie to you, she will be helpful to you..."

Samaya smiled.

"You're letting me live with grannie?" she asked.
"Grannie will be happy for getting rid of that Soviet barrack. Agaoghlu, may God protect you!"

In fact, Hatam didn't do any mistake.

The foundation of the settlement was laid recently. Malikajdar came to watch the dance performance organized here every evening joining to village children. Beautiful Maria didn't get tired who was dancing well. Her nice skirt which was opening like an umbrella as she was turning around vibrated Absheron's unforgettable nights and caused a fire on the hearts of the village boys who reached their early maturity.

Malikajdar fell in love with her from the first day. Sometimes, even when the dancing nights end, he didn't leave the settlement, and wondered around the barrack where Maria was living in. Though the people around didn't give any meaning to that little boy's acts, Maria noticed something. When she met him, she was making a joke with Malikajdar:

"Little man, when you'll grow up?

Talented village children were selling figs, grapes and greens at the village and earning money. Malikajdar seeing this was encouraged, persuaded his sick mother and got her consent, gathered figs and grapes from their yard, filled in the baskets and brought to the settlement. As he was interested in the selling, he was satisfied with what people gave to him. His satisfaction and ungreedy

feature increased the number of his habits, and soon he became the beloved one of the settlement women.

He didn't receive money from Maria and gave figs and grapes to her free of charge. The little boy's love amazed beautiful woman. She said:

"Little man, you'll get bankrupted if you distribute your goods to this or that person freely..."

Malikajdar investigated some facts about her. He watched Maria to be often with the head of the club. The name of that young man was Sani. He was tall and thick-necked.

Once, Maria asked Malikajdar:

"Do you have any kinship with Sani?"

"No, I don't."

"You look like each other much. As if you are his son."

Malikajdar's success was not welcomed by the village guys. They forced him out. Once, Maria saw their fight, started to separate them and drive out those who caused the fight, and took Malikajdar whose clothes were spoiled with soil and dirt, to her barrack taking his hand. She sewed his buttons destroyed and skirt torn. Then she washed the blood on his face. Malikajdar who was bared to the waist kept silent during this time. Then he whispered slowly:

"I love you, Maria!"

Maria smiled.

"You are little, yet," she said.

"How do you know what is love?"

The boy said:

"I am fifteen," and then he angrily pulled his shirt over his body.

Maria made a promising smile.

"When you grow up, we'll talk about it" – she said and put her hand on the boy's shoulder and slightly pushed him to the corridor. "Now, go!"

Suddenly, the door opened, Sani entered the room. He was drunk strongly. And he saw this scene, and growled.

"Maria, and now you're seducing children?" he asked.

"Sani, a shame on you!" Maria got offended. "But he is a child..."

"Yes, I see. I see, he is a child. And just for this I got surprised that what such a young boy is doing with you?"

Sani again growled. He embraced Maria by her waist and dragged her to the bend behind the curtain, and Malikajdar watched this scene, threw himself at him with anger. Sani left the woman and took by the neck of the boy:

"Get out, puppy!" he said and separated him from himself and kicked him from back with his knee and threw him out of the barrack.

Thus, Malikajdar's first love story ended like that.

Years passed by quickly.

Maria who was working at the quarry suffered from misfortune, so she fell under the stone cutting machine. Though she was taken to hospital on time, she lost both of her legs. Maria who didn't lose her beauty until yesterday, became older, there were wrinkles on her face and her hair bleached after the accident.

The pension provided was not even enough for her medicines. Her daughter who was mentally ill was taken to the madhouse, and she would be sent home for the disabled, but her granddaughter who recently graduated from technical school, Samaya didn't agree.

Maria said:

"It will be difficult for you."

Samaya, who found a job for herself recently, confidently said:

"Don't worry, we'll have a solution together!"

Maria for persuading her:

"You think that your mother can live with a madhouse's meal? –she asked. – You ought to feed her.

"The salary will be enough for all three of us! – saying Samaya smiled, and grandma, I haven't yet used my main weapon.

Disabled Maria tried to deviate her granddaughter:

"I don't want you to spend your beauty to us! – she said. "I was also beautiful, but I destroyed my life. And I don't permit you to repeat it.

Maria's misfortune didn't impress her acquaintances. She had very notorious reputation at the settlement and villages around it. Everyone considered the misfortune happened to the woman was the God's rightful punishment.

Malikajdar who worked as a shop manager for some time didn't break his relations with the settlement after getting the new job. He took part in every wedding and funeral in the settlement. He didn't forget the persons with whom he had relationships for a long time and he tried to help those who were in trouble as possible as he could. Everyone was happy for Aga's arrival. He also helped Maria. One day, he drove the car to her house. Seyfal was also there together with him.

Maria was not alone. Samaya had already returned back from the work. She was working at the collective farm which was more far away from the settlement.

She immediately made a table and served them tea. She didn't take her eyes from the guests. Not only a single act of Malikajdar about whom legends were spread everywhere was digressed from her notice.

The guest put money under Maria's pillow. The woman shed a few tears and said:

"I can't return back your goodness, Aga!"

Malikajdar hinted and joked:

"Never mind, if you can't get out of goodness, then better be under the goddness, and stay there!"

Maria Topal suddenly became joyful:

"But it is not bad to be under the goodness, Aga! If only I were young I would pay your debt in a nice way!" she laughed impudently.

Malikajdar smiled.

"You've not changed at all, you are the same Maria!"

When they wanted to say goodbye, Maria hinted to her granddaughter. Samaya shyly took Aga's hand and said:

"Aga, bless me, please! Give me good fortune, Aga!"

Malikajdar was very touched by this beautiful girl's words and put his hand on Samaya's head. When he got out of the house he whispered something to Seyfal. Seyfal got surprised and asked:

"Every month?"

Malikajdar answered decisively:

"Yes, every month."

"What is going on, my Aga?"

Malikajdar said indifferently:

"I am returning back my old debts!"

"You're in debt too?" he asked surprisingly.

Malikajdar laughed at Seyfal's confusion, said calmly:

"That's not what you can understand, my sister's grandson! Don't even think about it!"

Seyfal couldn't learn the reason of his generosity even afterwards. However, each month he came to Maria's shack, delivered Aga's envelope with money to the disabled woman personally and instead of it, brought many blessings and prayings.

Now, Maria had much time to think deeply about what happened to her. She always had a chance to turn back half-way that she fell down due to need. She woke up only when she struck against the Alhad stone¹. Samaya, at the request of her grandmother, took him to all sanctuaries in Baku. Maria weeped, shed tears in the holy places for hours. And she visited often to Malikajdar's sanctuary. Each time, she tied her old waistbands around the branches of old mulberry tree and asked her granddaughter to help her turning around the stone tomb. Once when they returned back from the sanctuary, she showed her the estates around the sanctuary.

"If you have a brain, you'll be a bride at one of these houses," she said.

Samaya answered ironically:

"Well, why weren't you there?"

Maria sighed and said:

¹ Alhad stone means headstone, there is a saying in Azeri: you never understand the life until your head strikes the Alhad stone (headstone).

"I should have done something when I had the chance. But I was crazy enough!"

Samaya said:

"Grandma, don't fall to thinking, and don't make me to give up my own way!"

As if Maria didn't hear her granddaughter, she said:

"Did you see that man turning around the sacred place? He was looking at you very interesting!"

Samaya set her black shawl straight, said:

"What shall I do, grandma, all visitors were looking at me curiously!"

"He was not a visitor, he was the eldest son of Aga."

Samaya didn't believe.

"How do you know?"

"I know!" Maria smiled. "Unfortunately, he is married."

Once Maria whose needs were partially covered by Malikajdar Aga demanded of her granddaughter to take her to great Mosque.

"Take me to the great Mosque in the village."

Samaya got angry, said:

"Woman, didn't you get tired? We ended up with sanctuaries, and now mosques?"

"I want to convert to Islam."

Samaya said ironically:

“You think that if you convert to Islam, God will bestow on you a leg? And you’ll return to your old art?”

“Don’t speak in a blasphemy manner, my daughter!” said Maria and raised her finger. “Maybe God deprived me of my leg in order to prevent me to do sinful acts. Who knows! Frankly, my daughter, I got rid of living in sin.”

Samaya surprised of the words of the former loose woman.

They treated Maria’s wish at the mosque doubtfully. And they asked advice from Malikajdar Aga. And he said that God’s gates are always open and penitence doesn’t depend on the less or more number of person’s sins. After mullah taught the main provisions of Islam to Maria at his permission, a small ceremony was held at the sanctuary, and a table was formed in honor of a new muslim woman.

Hatam’s direct glances at Samaya who was taking part in the ceremony were immediately noticed by Maria. And she suddenly thought how to invite to their house Aga’s son and encourage him for friendship.

A version of story happened in the settlement when when Islamic religious people began to increase.

Malikajdar received the good news from Krasnoyarsk. His smallest son Khalis was appeared at last from the ling-lost town.

Last year Khalis left the house silently and now he appeared and Tidora khanum was a bit more calm right now, but she forced Malikajdar to visit to his son. Before he left, he was preparing hard. As he had to take Seyfal with him Aga had given his son Hatam charge of his family and all property.

Not a single day passed, Bij Abdul came to Hatam with the bad news.

The next day after his leave Hatam got the bad news from Bij Abdul.

“Aga, we recently went out from the sea, we heard that the screaming comes from the rocky place. When we reached there, we saw that two young boys wanted to rape a girl. We reached and kicked the boys. It was known that the girl was the granddaughter of Maria Topal. We wanted to take her to her house, but she said to take to Malikajdar Aga. And shou would speak to Aga...”

Hatam remembered that girl whom he saw at the last ceremony and asked:

“So who were all those chaps?”

Bij Abdul said:

“One of them we recognized.”

“Who is this guy?”

“Son of Jinni Jani who is selling old things in bazaar.”

“He’s kidnapped the girl?”

“No, the other boy. And Janioghlu helped him.”

“If I am not mistaken, Jani is one of Sani’s friends?”

Mizi knew well the enemies of the family, he said:

“He is not Sani’s friend, but his helpmate. As I know, Jinni was in prison together with Sani.”

Hatam aga stood up.

“And that’s why his son boasts?” he said. “Where are those bastards?”

Bij Abdul said:

“We tied their hands and threw them into the boat. And now we are waiting for your advice.”

Hatam got very angry and said:

“Maybe, we tie stones on their legs and throw into the water?”

Mizi looked at his son-in-law amazingly and shook his head; Hatam thought for a while, then said in a cold way:

“No, we couldn’t hide this, better beat them well and then let them go away!”

Bij Abdul asked:

“But what about the girl, agaoghlu?”

“Get her, bring her back here. Let us see, what she has to say”

The girl whose clothes were torn entered the room and when she saw Hatam started to weep.

"It wasn't my fault, Agaoghlu!" she shed tears.

In fact, the real bridge among them was established by those tears.

-V-

"Grandma, I'll take you to my house from tomorrow" said Samaya.

Maria Topal's old barrack where she had lived for more than thirty years became a hearth by the arrival of her granddaughter. The old woman became cheerful looking at the girl and remembered her young years. Not only men, but also women were amazed of Samaya's dazzling beauty. Strange bloods mixed in her vessels created a miracle passed through the nature's filter.

Maria Topal said doubtfully: "' I'm afraid I'll be in your way!"

Samaya convinced her to take to house.

"No, never. It's Hatam"s will."

"Have you visited to your mother?"

Samaya got upset.

"Sure! What's the problem?"

"I wanted to know how she was."

Samaya responded disrespectfully:

"How she will be? She would rather die than to be alive. Now, she doesn't recognise anyone!"

Maria Topal's eyes got wet.

"Don't talk that way, my child! God only knows what to do! Take care of her."

Samaya choked with sorrow.

"But I am taking care of her! If I don't pay to doctors and nurses who will take care of her!"

Maria grieved and said:

"At such a young age you remained between two disabled persons! You are such a kind-hearted girl! God will bless you, my child!"

Samaya's face became lightened with satisfaction, but her grandmother's expressiveness made her laugh.

"Grandma, it seems that you want to be a mullah after converting to Islam!

Maria didn't pay attention to her granddaughter's hint and changed the topic:

"Do something for yourself! If only I could make him agree..."

Samaya interrupted her:

"You think that it is easy?" – she asked. "If I insist on, it will hurt him. Hatam aga is a kind man and he protects me. He constructed such a large house for me..."

Maria said thankfully:

"You became the bride of a worthy family! Like our Teddy..."

Samaya got surprised:

“Who is Teddy?”

“I am talking about Teadora khanum, Malikajdar’s wife. She is our relative. I would bring this secret together with me to the grave, I promised Teddy, but I see that it is better you know about this story.”

Samaya was interested in the story, and came up near her grannie and tried to be relaxed.

“Grandma, you have something to tell me, I guess.”

Maria Topal started to speak by choosing words:

“It was the first times of the settlement. We became mad due to the village boys. Some of them were selling fruit, others were selling greens! They were coming group by group. There was a shortish boy in the village. He seldom came to the settlement. And we hadn’t heard his voice yet. He was bringing and selling figs and grapes with full of baskets.

Samaya interrupted her grandmother:

“What was the year?”

Maria Topal breathed deeply:

“Probably, it was 1953. We were just brought here from Moldova”

Samaya again interrupted her grandmother:

“Why you were moved to Baku?”

Maria Topal smiled and said:

“I ought to start from the beginning that you don’t interrupt me every time.”

I was seven or eight when the war started,” Maria Topal began to continue the story. “I don’t remember more things. We were living in a small hut in the middle of the forest. People were dealing with bee-keeping. There were honeycombs everywhere. When Germans arrived, they didn’t destroy the gang, they entrusted the hut to a believed man. If I am not mistaken, my father served the Germans. He joined Benderovchus. Each time when he came home his hands were full of food and gifts. He liked to sit under the oak tree near the well. As if the man was fell in love with this tree. And he used to turn around it, climb on the tree. He was sitting there for hours. And I must say that it was not every man’s work to climb on this tree. Its body was flat, wide and without knot. Germans disappeared at the end of fortyfour.

The Soviet army returned back. As soon as, we specified that those in huts served to Germans, they fired all men. And they also shot my brother at the age of sixteen, but my father ran away and saved his life. In the year fortyfive, they took the women of the hut by armed soldiers. They said that they were going to send us to Siberia tomorrow. We also joined our mother crying, but soldiers didn’t allow. One sergeant couldn’t endure and said to the officer: “They are poor, let’s take them to the center of the district, they’ll stay and live there. Maybe they will be sent to orphanage”.

The officer shook his head and said that it was written in the order that they had to take the family members of the enemies who reached the maturity, but not the underaged children.

The punishment group fired all houses of the hut. All the little children ran into the forest. All was thinking about himself and herself. It was winter. Freeze did cut the bone as a knife. We found a shelter among grass haystack in the forest together with my sister. She was two years older than me, but she was skillful. She dugged the bottom part of the grass haystack. She formed a hot drilling. We didn't die from hunger that year. We had a lot of honey and potatoes to eat. Honeycombs remained without control. We were collecting honey and changed it for food in neighboring huts. Once, my sister said: "Do you remember the oak tree near our well? I said that yes, I remember. My sister said: "Our father hided gold under that tree. I asked that how did she know. My sister said that when they exiled our mother, she said. My sister responded that I was faster than her, I could climb on the tree. I said I couldn't, I was afraid. My sister said that she was also afraid.

Then, an old woman living in the neighboring hut took us to her house. There we knew that she was one of our far relatives. The old woman was lived alone. As her sons died in the war, she was not afraid of the government. We lived for one or two months in this way.

Then the collective farm was restored. The old woman went in front of us. They also took us to the collective farm.

The chairman of the gang was living in the center of the district, he was going and coming to and from the hut in a plunder German motorcycle. He was a strong man who had seen much difficulties. Women in the hut who were in need of men looked at him longingly. And he was acting like a stallion. There was no woman left which he could have any relationship. And he also knew smells very well like hunting dog. He had learned about us in detail. However, he couldn't turn around us as the old woman was living.

Soon, the old woman died, unfortunately. The chairman of the gang started acting freely. Every day he visited our hut and helped us. My sister was young, she was lightheaded and smiled at chairman. Once, the chairman came in drunken state. He raced my sister in front of my eyes. And when he left, he threatened us: "Shut up! If you say something, I'll exile both of you to Siberia".

We kept calm as we feared. Then, the chairman of the gang gave oneself up to our hut. Wherever his wife got news about this relationship. She secretly came to the village. And she found her husband together with my sister in our hut. She caused a big fight. One day, police came to the hut and they took me and my sister to the

center of the district. There were many girls and women in the yard of the police department. All of them were from politically unreliable families like us. Although they treated us warmly. As they said, they didn't exile us, they only changed our residential place. We didn't notice it. Anyway, they promised us that we would have both work and apartment where we were being sent.

They made us get on cargo wagons. After the train moved, the situation changed. The controlling soldiers of the internal troops were very different from policemen. As if all of them were selected. They know nothing about moral values. They had relationship with all beautiful women. I also lost my virginity in the same wagon. My sister was more beautiful than me. Who had authority he came immediately and took my sister away. One day, she was brought in bloods. They called doctor's assistant. However, nothing helped her. Her dead body was taken out at the next station from the wagon. I cried much, I had much sorrow, but in vein, this ugly life was to be lived in.

At this point, Maria Topal paused a little and became sorrowful. Finally, she overcame the sorrow, and started again:

"Finally, we arrived at Absheron fields," she tried to smile. "They made forty or five tents. Fortunately, it was summer. We lived in tents for some times.

They brought two or three bulldozers and stone cutting machines. We were working in dusty and sandy places. Stone mine was ready after bulldozers cleaned the ground. Rails were being established, stone cutting machines were being installed and power was being supplied. It was not difficult to manage stone cutting machines. Only, the voice of large saws worried me. We were cutting large sized stones.

The most difficult part of my work was changing saws. Firstly, it was difficult for me. Then I got used. I was tall and strong. Most times, I arranged the cutting machine in a way that it worked in a low speed and I went downstairs. We were collecting stones cut in rows together with my colleagues. Stones were carried out by military vehicles. As we had heard, rocket defense base was being constructed nearby and runways for military planes were being laid down. We were returning back from the work in the evening. We used up to have a bath. Then rested a little. Then we were dancing in the small platform between tents under the voice of garmon. Here, we were free. There was no soldier standing near us. However, once a week, we were being registered. For this, we had to pass from the tent where the note "Commandant's office" was written. After a while, the foundation of stone barracks was laid. We were acting as masters of the construction. Cement was saved. Due to obligation, we were putting stone onto stone. Wood was

much. They had brought large wooden boxes from the military unit. We established a hut. The commandant found used slate, and we nailed them with nails taken out of the box. Though we were working hard, we met the winter in tents. Barracks were prepared only for spring. They gave a room for each of us.

Samaya asked:

“Did the settlement consist of only women? Wasn’t there any man?”

Maria Topal wrinkled her forehead:

“There were also men. They were prisoners. In comparison, our state was good. They were being registered twice in a day. Then, those who had been deviated from army also rooted at the settlement.

Samaya felt sorry for her grandmother:

“Grandma, what difficult days you lived!”

Maria Topal agreed.

“Yes, I did!” she said. “However, I had good days, too.”

Samaya shook his head.

“Grandma, what good days you are talking about?”

Maria Topal clenched her fingers.

“Don’t speak so, my daughter! When I knew about your mother’s existence in my womb, I became happy. I thought I’d never be mother. I was happy when your mother was born. When she grew up, I became happy. Isn’t it enough?”

Samaya wrinkled her face.

"Don't get offended, I said by the way" she changed the topic of the talk. "And who was the father of your baby? That's, who is my grandfather?"

Maria Topal sighed.

"It's better you don't know..." she said.

Samaya laughed at her grandma's keeping a secret.

"Woman, tell me!" she insisted on.

Maria Topal said after a while:

"If you insist on, I'll tell you. Your grandfather is Sani Absheroni who is now one of the kings of the criminal world.

Samaya surprised.

"What are you telling?"

Maria Topal with a false pride.

"Yes, yes, your grandfather is Sani," she responded.

"May God take him! He can't live without prison. As they say, he is again in prison."

"Grandma, they say that he is Aga's enemy. Is it right?" Samaya asked.

"Yes, it is, maybe, Aga didn't forget Sani's kick which he exposed to in his childhood."

Samaya asked:

"Now, tell me about your acquaintance with Sani. How it happened?"

Maria Topal being satisfied with her granddaughter's interest, answered:

"In the end of the year fifty four, the settlement became larger. A young boy was appointed as a club manager. His name was Sani. He was a tall and broad-shouldered boy. And he had two friends around him. As soon as, they arrived, there was order in the settlement. Village's young boys began behave orderly. Now, there was no fight at dance nights. There were many beautiful and fallen women in the settlement. Sani had have time with them. I didn't allow every man to approach me and avoid idleness. Maybe, it drew Sani's attention. He started to visit me in my room often. In fact, though I hided, I had fallen in love with him and told about all my life him. Even I told him about my father's hiding gold in the tree. We had wife and husband relationship for six months. Suddenly, Sani disappeared. Nobody saw him for a month. He returned back suddenly as he had left. Sani was changing women like handkerchief. Once, we had a strong fight. I didn't allow him to enter my room. It was late when I knew that I was pregnant. I didn't expect it."

Maria Topal kept calm and thought. Samaya took her hands.

"And you didn't say to him?"

Maria Topal growled:

“He wasn’t interesting for me!” she said. “If I’d say, he wouldn’t believe in me. And Sani also was not family lover. He was engaging in killing and robbing. I knew that the place of such person would be prison one day. And it was happened. They sentenced him with an imprisonment of many years as he killed our commandant. When your mother was born, his court hearing was continuing.”

Samaya couldn’t hide her irony.

“I also was thrown out from the sky?”

Maria Topal ironically acted like she was not listening to her granddaughter.

“Though she is my child, I must tell that your mother was not good child for me. I wanted to see my daughter like a lady. I wanted her to study, and be among people, not live hard days like us, but it was not so. Some of girls who came from Moldovia married and had families. Day by day, the settlement had relationships with surrounding villages. Now, there were not dance nights, village boys didn’t come here and fight for women. Everything remained in the past. The children of the settlement were going schools in the neighboring village. Your mother who was the ninth form fell in love with a young man older than her. As I heard, that young boy was engaging not in good things. However, he also loved your mother. Every day, he followed her from school to the house. They were whispering for hours

near the fence. Their conversation didn't end. As I saw that its end wouldn't be good, I scolded your mother. However, he didn't pay attention to my words. The boy's family didn't agree with this marriage. His mother and father didn't agree anyway. A respectful family in the village didn't want to marry their son to the daughter of an immoral woman. Your mother ran away with the boy. They lived together for some times at the rent houses. One day, they arrested your father. And your mother returned back to me with a child. I wouldn't allow her to the house if she hadn't a child. Your mother was faithful. She spent her life in the way to prison. Her friend Gulu was taking care for the baby, that's, you. I am talking about your aunt Gulu! Your father was killed in prison. Your mother didn't look at other men. Maybe for this reason she became mad. If I wasn't disabled, I would look after her at the house, but it was impossible, I took her to the mad house. And this is the fate of our family."

Samaya stood up.

"Yes, grandma, after listening to you, a person wants to murder herself!" she said.

Maria Topal sighed.

"Before you would better kill me!"

Kashtan whom Seyfal brought with him complained to Malikajdar jokingly after greetings:

“Aga, as you were not here, they served me only tea, I am dying from hunger,” he said. “If they give meal, in this case, they don’t serve vodka with it.”

Seyfal said.

“Shut up with it, Kashtan, it is sin. But you are in sanctuary!”

“I’ll not!” Kashtan shouted. “They must give vodka to the Russian man!”

Malikajdar made fun of Kashtan:

“I feel sorry for you!” he said. “But take care of yourself, vodka will cause your end.”

“My Aga, even vodka cannot cause Russian’s end!” he didn’t kept his jokes. “Aga, from now give me the control of Mizi. He is joyful. We’ll drink with him remembering our old days.”

Mizi angrily looked at the Russian man who revealed his old acts.

“Kashtan, don’t speak about old days, you know that I am under a vow not to sin again.”

Kashtan opened his hands aside as he knew that the uncle and nephew didn’t have good relationships.

“What, you also want to go to paradise like Seyfal?” he laughed ironically. “How will you behave there?”

Malikajdar, seeing Mizi and Seyfali’s difficult state, said:

“Tell me about your selling? Can you sell flowers?” he changed the topic.

Kashtan got sad, he hardly kept himself crying.

"What are you saying, my Aga? Previously, merchants didn't leave our door, but now, there is no one. Even I visited one or two of them, I sell carnation even freely, again, no one wants. I throw them to the dump!" he said. "Maybe, you instruct to Rahib that he helps me."

"I'll tell him. Now, I've called you for another issue. I have to meet the General."

Kashtan hesitantly said:

"But you know the rules. I promise that I'll deliver all what you've said word by word."

"Sometimes, rules can be violated."

"Of course, Aga!" Kashtan shook his head. "However, the time became difficult, the general doesn't want his name to be sounded here and there and mentioned together with the Aga's name."

Seyfal became angry.

"Kashtan, the general ought to be proud of his name being mentioned along with the name of Malikajdar Aga..."

Malikajdar interrupted Seyfal.

"Be patient, my son!" he explained his opinion to Kashtan. "Tell the general that Aga persists and we have to meet."

"OK, I'll say, Aga, but I know that he'll not agree," Kashtan didn't hide his doubts.

"Do what I am saying! Though it's night, send me information, I am waiting."

Kashtan came with good news when it became dark. Malikajdar immediately started the practical work.

“So, we should do preparation for tomorrow evening.”

Kashtan didn't hide his surprise.

“Yes, my Aga,” he said. “Though it is strange, he agreed as soon as I said your words. I refuted and said to the general that he violated the rules himself.”

Malikajdar said with a slight irony:

“What did the general say?”

“He responded similar to you. He said that when you don't break the rules, the life becomes boring”, Kashtan laughed. “What is it that you hide from me?”

“For now, I cannot tell, Kashtan!”

“Have I lost my trust?” Kashtan got offended.

“Don't be disappointed, this issue has not been yet matured, it will not make any sense telling you,” Malikajdar tried to soothe Kashtan. “I can only say that if our talk produces any result, you'll also have your benefit. Are not we the friends of many years?”

Indeed, the history of their friendship was ancient.

The settlement shop under the military trade unit was being controlled by the Deputy Commanding Officer for security. He did everything he wanted. The deputy was a shortish, stubborn Armenian. Though Malikajdar

was the owner of the shop, he couldn't say anything. The deputy made them to sell those things which he obtained from soldiers' share in the shop and took all profits made from them. It went without saying that Malikajdar knew that the Armenian didn't act on his own. And he was supported by the commander of the unit.

It was a confused management system. The commandant's department was established in the settlement. Along with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from different regions of the country, both civilians and those who were liberated from prisons early, and also those who were involved in compulsory labor were working at the stone quarry. Civilians were applying to the village council nearby for documents. And it proved the fact that they were free citizens. The rest of the population was subordinated to the commandant.

Stones extracted from the quarries were used for the needs of the military unit and their excess were being sold to the civil departments. Here, the labor of slaves whose freedom was restricted was used in return of meager wages. If required, the soldiers of the military unit were also forced to work at the quarry.

It was the seventies. The fear in the country became decreased. Malikajdar strived for comfort. And when there was such an opportunity, he didn't miss it. At that time, they replaced the commander of the military

unit. The shop was taken from the subordination of the military trade and given to the worker supply. Aga breathed freely.

The warrant officer who brought the goods to the shop became friend with the owner. Though his surname was Kashtanov, all called him Kashtan. Malikajdar, as soon as, being aware of the changes in the unit, took a risk after thinking considerably. He returned back the goods brought and said to the warrant officer:

“Kashtan, tell the deputy of the unit’s commander that the shop owner doesn’t accept goods without receipt anymore...”

The humorous warrant officer surprised. And he asked:

“But are not you afraid of?”

Malikajdar Aga:

“Tell exactly what I’ve said,” responded.

Some days passed. New commander of the unit with colonel rank called Malikajdar. He didn’t scold the shop owner, he kept silent for a while, then he said gently:

“I received your order. Shall we work if we share the profit into two parts?”

Malikajdar smiled:

“It would be faithful” he said.

The colonel, smiling:

“OK, so we’re agreed! said. “Do you have any other word?”

Malikajdar tried to solve the issue that bothered him to the end.

“Colonel, maybe you instruct the food supply to Kastanov? Though he is a warrant officer, he is clever” he said. “I am afraid that your deputy will betray you. It’s better that you repel him.”

The colonel:

“We agreed it, too!” said and stood up and shouted without hiding his anger.

“Little man, didn’t you recognize me?”

“Can a man forget his commander?”

Malikajdar hardly recognized Ivanov. He was his team commander in the army. The past fifteen years made the young lieutenant a demure man. They hugged each – other.

“But commander, why didn’t you deliver my letter?” Malikajdar asked a question that engaged him.

“Excuse me, soldier,” the colonel twisted his neck as a sinner. “I saw your name among the missed ones in the information coming from Hungary and I considered it meaningless to deliver your letter to your girlfriend.”

It didn’t pass much that Kashtan became the commander’s right hand. He was a Russian boy who knew how to act. And also, he didn’t forget the men

whom he was grateful. Aga didn't make a mistake in his choice.

An ordinary warrant officer controlled the food supply of a large military unit for a long time. He managed the economy freely as all intelligent men. It was impossible to find a fault in the finance documents and they were always in good order. The inspectors of the Military Department couldn't do anything against him. The warrant officer didn't take the earnings himself, he was able to share them. Several years ago, when he wanted to retire, general Ivanov who was the commander of the military unit, didn't accept the warrant officer's report.

Kashtan came and complained to Malikajdar:

"I also want to live as human, Aga. It is twenty five years that I serve to my Homeland, but Ivanov didn't allow.

Some days after this conversation Kashtan came to him in a civilian dress.

"I was released," he said.

"But what about Ivanov?" Malikajdar asked.

"They raised both the position and the rank of your friend. Now, he is general and at the Army Headquarter. We have a party on this occasion in the evening. And we invite you, too" Kashtan smiled.

"Do you want my help once more?" Malikajdar asked.

Kashtan with anxiety said:

"I need a civil work and a place to live in!"

Malikajdar became calm after thinking a while said:

“Don’t be afraid, we’ll assign you as the guard for the worker supply and provide you with temporary place for living in. We’ll not put your family outside! It is enough that you bring a warranty letter from the unit.”

“Really?” Kashtan got amazed.

General Ivanov came not in official passenger car, but in an old “UAZ”. Probably, he refrained from insinuating himself. He didn’t come alone, his grandson was also with him. That little, five years old boy behaved like an old man.

Neither his driver, nor his bodyguard said anything. They were thinking about the general. They sat at the table with anxiety. They were eating meal in a hurry.

The granddaughter of the general was brunette. She was speaking Russian fluently and Azerbaijani hardly. Malikajdar said:

“It is immediately known that she is the fruit of our garden.”

Seyfal confirmed:

“As if she is Shiriyev, himself.”

The General listening to the translation of their hints smiled. His son – in – law, Shiri Shiriyev was Azerbaijani. Recently, he was assigned the director of

huge subtropical farm located far from the villages. He asked Malikajdar:

“How are your relations with Shiri, Aga?”

Malikajdar said indifferently:

“We don’t have any relationship. Shiriyev runs away from us.”

“Why?”

“Shiriyev has relationship with the city officials, why does he need us?”

The General said mildly:

“Yes, I know that my son – in – law’ superciliousness is his misfortune. However, I ask you to always pay attention to Shiri. The condition becomes difficult day by day.’

Malikajdar said curiously:

“Anything is wrong?”

The General murmured:

“Shiri doesn’t say a word. However, once Albina said that a person came and asked Shiri “ceiling”.

Malikajdar frowned:

“Let him not be worried. For now, there is no danger, Sani Absheronki is in prison.”

“Aga, what danger you are talking about? Who is Sani? Whom you talk about?”

The General noticed Malikajdar’s brief explanation that he lives near the criminal world. However, he found reliance from the confident behavior of the little man.

“Then, I am listening to you, Aga! What’s the matter?”

The General was a businesslike person. He immediately understood the main point. He didn’t like Malikajdar’s suggestion.

“It is not worth talking to the management of the airport,” he said,

“The city police wouldn’t listen to me”.

“In a word, you refuse from starting this business?” Malikajdar indifferently asked.

“Aga, I am thinking,” Ivanov did unclear action, and suddenly asked: “Are military planes suitable for carrying flowers?”

Malikajdar looked at General confusingly.

“Why not?” he touched his forehead.

“Really, there are so huge aerodromes in the hands of the headquarter.”

The General asked:

“How many flights do you need in a week?”

Malikajdar immediately calculated:

“Three or four flights are enough. After our works get in order, we’ll increase the number of flights, if necessary.”

The General smiled:

“No problem.”

“Which planes will be there?”

“Cargo aircraft, helicopters, even fighting jets can be involved in carrying cargo.”

"Which cities can your transport vehicle flight to?" Malikajdar was interested.

"We can flight wherever you want."

"Ok, the technical aspect of the operation is clear. We solved it" Malikajdar finished the talk.

"You better be busy with the financial aspect of the operation, Aga, and I shall solve the technical aspect" Ivanov laughed. "We have short of money."

Malikajdar said:

"There are large amount of money in this business."

The General pulled his nose in disbelief.

"You think that money is worthy of generals?"

"They are even worthy of kings," Malikajdar answered decisively.

"How much approximately?"

Ivanov stood up suddenly and pressed the cigarette into the ashtray.

"O, no!" he smiled in disbelief. "It can't be like that!"

"Yes, General, don't have doubts

"Malikajdar answered. "Give me your hand, general!"

Ivanov shook his hand in a satisfied manner. He knew that this little man was created for big deals. They got acquainted with each other for many years. He earned enough money thanks to him. He unexpectedly suggested:

"It seems to me that we ought to meet often."

Malikajdar said:

"I am ready. I myself put obstacles."

The General explained:

"Then, it was needed."

Malikajdar didn't understand.

"What's changed?"

The General said ironically:

"This is glasnost, publicity and perestroika!¹ Didn't you see that they changed the head of our republic within night?"

Malikajdar shook his head:

"And what? "

The General surprisingly shook his head:

"Do you know the new first secretary?"

"Who is he?"

"Once upon a time, his father was the director of the stone quarry in the settlement."

"Really? Probably, you were a close friend of him."

"Yes, Aga, it is a luck! So, when you need, apply directly to me. We don't need an intermediary anymore. Now, I don't have time, I have to go. Will you see me off?"

Malikajdar understood the hint.

"Yes, of course, " - he said.

The General shook hands with everyone and went downstairs. However, he didn't get in the car, and waited for Malikajdar who was following him.

¹ Reconstruction (russian)

Sakil Gochu got excited again, he invaded the outside stall and gathered all the young people of the generation around him. The old man, who was enthusiastic for such assemblies, got pleasure from joking with the young people who grew up in front of his eyes. Sarraf, Adam aga, Mizioghlu Bij

Abdul, Hatam aga waited for new talks. Seyfal's teenage sons sat aside and listened attentively. They were fresh at such assemblies.

"Let me tell you about our chieftainship. We were three friends. Our head was Akhund Mir Gadir's brother, Malikajdar's uncle Mir Janpolad, may his soul rest in peace. We were also cousins. Our third friend was Sani's father, Nazioghlu Gulu. Our youth passed in bad works. Our work was to beat, make rumors about this or that man and chatter at the corners and teahouses. We were completely exhausted of ourselves, poverty overdrove us.

Some young people in the village ran to the city. They were working at oil fields. It is true that they were making profit, but they lived in bad conditions. Even the water of one bath couldn't clean the spots of black oil on them. We didn't experience that life.

Gulu was called as Nazioghlu that his father's name was unknown, but his mother's name was Nazi. It went

without saying that Nazi probably knew the father of her child, but she didn't tell anyone about him for any reason. According to sayings, the life of this woman was difficult. Though people spoke a lot about her, she lived honestly from the beginning of her arrival in our village, it was impossible to say anything about her. My deceased mother said that only she and God knew that where she came from, as if she was hided from anyone.

When she arrived in our village with her son at the age of fourteen or fifteen, Nazi wasn't even thirty. As she went to the sanctuary, she stayed at one of the cloisters. Then, Mir Gadir aga recommended Nazi to accommodate at the hut near the village. The married couple who lived previously here was one of the followers of Aga. As both of them died from unknown disease in a month, no one wanted to approach that place. Nazi heard about this, but she wasn't afraid and enthusiastically started to do the work. She brought quick-lime from Surakhani. She bleached the walls, floor and even the ceiling of the hut, she whitewashed everything around, then moved here. First times, she was living with Aga's donations. Then her work increased, she was doing cleaning at the houses of the rich, making bedding and mattress. She even didn't have any time for leisure during the garden season. People were calling her for cooking molasses, harvesting and drying grape and fig. In winter, she

racked wool, spin yarn, paint them with onion water and wove everything from socks to dresses.

As the village was large, there were often assemblies. They were whether weddings or funerals, it doesn't matter, all black works were assigned to Nazi. The owners of the assemblies filled the basin which she brought herself with the meals remaining on the table in return of her hard work. Fair and merciful persons were giving five or ten kopeks to the women.

The young people of the village were touching her in the corners secretly, if she was on a mood, Nazi without hurry was opening her face. The one who saw her face once didn't approach her once again, because Nazi was very ugly woman. Her face was covered by black furrows. There were black wound traces on her forehead. The one who looked at her got fastidious.

Gulu was a small, aggressive boy. However, he was clever, and read better than everyone in the mullah's house. He was speaking about such things that we all were surprised. He liked to talk about chieftains. When we asked where he knew all from, he kept silent and hid the facts secretly.

I don't know whether according to Nazi's instructions or for any other reason, Gulu became Mir Janpolad's shade and didn't stay behind a step from him.

Let me also tell that Mir Janpolad was a tall and ugly one. He could knock down an ox by his blow. I witnessed

how he took the horn of the angry calf when we were passing along the butcher's shop and kicked it from its forehead in a way that the animal laid on the floor on its back and didn't move from its place for several minutes. Yes, my cousin was fire and flame. When he got angry, he was messing everything and everyone in the village.

Once we were going outside for walking. When we passed along her hut, Nazi saw us and invited us inside. We rejected. Nazi begged: "Brave guys! Kind Agas! The helpers of helpless people! Don't hurt the feelings of a widow woman!"

We couldn't withstand these words, and accepted the invitation. At least, Nazi was turning around us. She put her most delicious tastes on the table for us. We sat a while, when we wanted to say goodbye, Nazi saw off us. And said to her son that let's go and see of our dear guests.

I was seventeen then. Though Mir Janpolad was elder one or two years older than me, he looked like an old man from that time. His voice also sounded like a trumpet. I was going ahead together with Gulu. Suddenly, Nazi appeared in front of Janpolad. And she said that I had a word for you secretly, Aga. We left them. They talked much. When Nazi, whose back was towards us, was making order her headscarf sliding over her shoulder each time, my cousin's voice was dropping a point. Finally, they started whispering.

It was at those times when one of our relatives came to the town. We went to meet him. We knew that he worked together with a merchant and stood in front of the door of his shop and called customers. When we knew his profession, we all laughed. He looked at the height of Mir Janpolad enviously and said that if I had your power, I would engage in chieftainship.

This word made us act. We dreamed about to go to Baku and test our power. We started doing preparations. We gather our money together and bought a Mauser and one or two bundles of cartridges and then went to the field behind the sanctuary. We formed a shooting – mark and shot as much as we want. Nazioghlu Gulu was shooting best of all of us.

However, Mir Gadir prevented us. We couldn't leave the village without the permission of Akhund..."

Sakil Gochu couldn't tell the story till the end. The guest's sudden arrival made the talk incomplete. He was Lotu Fakhi.

-VIII-

Though Lotu called himself proudly a thief, he looked like a clever businessman aside. Though a large part of his life passed in prison, he only had a small tattoo on his wrist. This sign of crown was informing about his title of legitimate thief.

Malikajdar met Lotu standing up. He smiled and showed a place him:

“Brother, you have come back from prison with thorns to the spring. Whenever you want you may enter and leave” he said.

Fakhi took his seat and said:

“May I be sacrifice to your holy place, I am ready to overcome every kind of thorn in order to come to your sacred place.”

Malikajdar getting pleasant from Lotu’s words, said:

“How are the works in the black world?”

“There is silence, Aga,” said Lotu Fakhi and smiled.

Seyfal joined the talk:

“But they said there was a fight between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, they killed each other...”

“The fight was over, there was peace for several days. Sani made order everything as soon as he arrived to zone of the black world.”

“How?” Malikajdar asked curiously.

“He made the Ravils come ahead as soon as he arrived. After a day they found the legitimate thief of Armenian origin who caused that fight with his throat-cut with blade and the fight was over.”

Malikajdar kept silent. He didn’t like blood, and always avoided it. Lotu Fakhi didn’t stay much, looking at his watch, he stood up and said:

“Aga, I have to be at the black world at 18:00. I don’t have time. I still should visit some other places.”

Malikajdar understood the hint, and turned to Seyfal: “My son, deliver our donation “.

-IX-

Seyfal who returned back home in the evening greeted the women sitting on the sofa at the balcony and waiting for him. She was Hatam’s wife. The women covered her face with headscarf on her shoulder and stood up for the house’s owner in a hurry.

“Sit down, my cousin, what’s happened?” Seyfal asked.

His cousin was an obedient and healthy woman. Seyfal himself gave his consent her marriage with Hatam. Seyfal said to to his wife ironically siting near the guest:

“Why you pick up your ears? Go and just mind your own business!”

The woman left sinfully. His cousin began to talk:

“My cousin, I am ashamed to say that Hatam Aga didn’t sleep at the house for some nights...” she said slowly. “He left the house in the evening and came back early in the morning.”

Seyfal didn’t react.

"And what?" he asked.

"And how's that?" the woman didn't understand him. "I'm supposed to find out where my husband is going, right?"

Seyfal explained:

"He is a man, he can go out even days and nights, what is the problem? But why you don't ask him where he goes?"

"Is it possible to ask something him? He beats," the woman complained.

Seyfal asked:

"Why you didn't tell my uncle Mizi?"

The woman growled:

"Once I said to him, but the man got angry" she answered, then cried.

"My cousin, may I be your sacrifice, maybe Hatam Aga has got a lover?"

Seyfal couldn't keep himself and grumbled:

"I wish that Hatam aga had ties with a mistress. What's the problem to understand it?"

"My cousin, can you keep a secret?"

"Sure!"

"Cousin, for now, don't tell anyone, even Mrs. Tidora. Your husband is on a dangerous way" Seyfal whispered. "He's involved in politics. He spends his time at the meetings against the government."

The woman's face smiled.

"If only he is engaged in politics not in lovers!" she said.

Seyfal didn't share her joy:

"I wouldn't say so," he answered.

Seyfal stood up and comforted cousin asked him:

"I want Hatam not to know about my visit, or he'll kill me."

Seyfal thought a while after seeing off his cousin. He returned back to Aga's house He saw Mizi slumbered on the sofa, said:

"Go and have a rest. I am right here."

Seyfal waited for Hatam until the midnight. He was talking with the yard guard that he could wait for him and not to sleep. Late night the gate was knocked down. The guard looked through and opened the gate. Hatam drove the car in. He tiredly smiled when he saw Seyfal in the yard:

"My cousin, you are on the watch as always!" he hinted.

Seyfal met him ironically:

"What to do, Hatam aga, shall anyone do the cleaning of the stall or not?"

"What do you mean?"

"What you heard!" Seyfal answered strictly. "You put your head in the bush and think that we don't know what you are doing."

"Let's say that you know, and what?" Hatam asked.

"You gathered five or ten weak persons around you and imagine that you can fight against the Soviet government."

"Those five or ten persons would be five or ten thousand, then five or ten million..."

"Maybe you take me to your circle, too? As I heard, now, you are the head of the circle and occupied the place of that lamed literature teacher!"

Hatam confirmed:

"Yes, now, I am the head. After he was found to be betrayal, guys elected me" then added: "However, I can't accept you to the circle..."

"Why?"

"Your place is in the security service. You are just a secret agent!"

"You have just loosened your tongue!"

"It seems that my teachers were strong..." Hatam went towards his house without saying goodbye.

Next day in the morning Shakil Gochu continued the rest of the story. The young people who gathered around him were listening attentively. The geneological tree of the family was interesting for all.

“Mir Janpolad who didn’t have any fear was only afraid of his eldest brother. At those times, Mir Gadir was not thirty yet. He put his education incomplete in Gum, Iran and returned back to his homeland. As his father died, he started leading the sect.

Mir Gadir listened to his brother who came to get his blessings and sighed. Then, he looked at his cousin Shakil, then a young boy trying to hide himself on his back, and again turned to Janpolad:

“My brother, I wish you to study and get education. However, it couldn’t be realized, you looked like your idler uncles and preferred idling than going to mullah’s house. You were always beaten and cursed, but didn’t go on the right way, on the contrary, as said in the Holy Koran, you went along the road of those who lost their way, you tend not to books, but pistol and dagger,”.

Mir Jalal excitedly said:

“Aga, I am not enthusiastic to dawdle in the soil as a womb. You have studied for years, we have heard about you much everywhere, but we see your living

conditions. You work hard. Now, you want me to live hard like you?"

Mir Gadir responded decisively:

"Even, it is possible to live honourably in difficult conditions."

Janpolad's voice growled from stubbornness:

"Who can say that all of wealthy men are dishonest? Foreigners came to Baku from another side of the world, they earn millions and gain profit from oil, but why we must live in difficulty!"

"My brother, wealth doesn't bring happiness to person, on the contrary, it is the cause of all unhappiness."

As soon as, Mir Gadir paused, Shakil interfered in:

"My cousin, my Aga, the time for studying has already past. Give your consent for us going to the city and making profit" he made a joke. "Now it is time for pistol and dagger."

Aga shook his head:

"Pistol and dagger are not relevant for our sect," he said.

Janpolad:

"Though pistol and dagger are not relevant for the sect, but they are appropriate for this era" - he said.

Shakil, being careful that Mir Gadir would get angry, jokingly added:

"Aga, we want to earn little money, create conditions for ourselves, say goodbye poverty, then return back

to the village. Neither sect runs away, nor the way to truth!".

Aga frowned:

"Cousin, it is difficult to make those who left the way to the God return back to this way again. I see from your behaviour that your opinion is decisive. I can't interrupt you even if I want. Accept my blessings" he said, then hinting to Nazioghlu Gulu hid behind Shakil. "Who is that boy? I didn't recognize him."

Shakil, talked secretly with Janpolad, answered the question that interested Aga with some sentences. Mir Gadir said ironically:

"Why to tell so many words, Shakil, my cousin? A word would be enough..."

Shakil carefully asked:

"Which word is it?"

"You ought to say that he is Janpolad's stepson." Mir Gadir Aga smiled.

Janpolad didn't raise his head. Shakil confusingly said:

"We thought that you are unaware of this".

"How can I not know the fact which the whole village knew? Mir Gadir answered. "Good luck to you!"

Soon, Janpolad's small team consisting of three persons, grew at the expense of strong young men

coming from the village. Friends who became rich at the shortest time couldn't find place for the money they earned. Of course, the profit of the head was much more. Janpolad consulted with his friends:

"What do you think, which place is better for me to keep this money?"

Nazioghlu Gulu said:

"Maybe you put it in the bank? They say, the rich people put their money in the bank."

Shakil didn't agree:

"Money should be right there under the hand of the man!"

Mir Janpolad thought a little, he converted a part of banknotes to gold, and sent them by Shakil to the village, and entrusted him:

"Tell Aga that he can spend as much as he wants and let him hide the rest.

As soon as, Mir Gadir Aga knew the reason for Shakil's arrival, said angrily:

"Do I look like those who eat non – allowed one? You think, I will take money from robbery?"

Shakil tried to persuade him:

"My Aga, what are you talking about, what is non – allowed one, dishonourable, all of them are halal¹ money as breastmilk. We are on our foot at noon and night,

¹ Halal means permitted, allowed according to Musulman shariat

and protect the goods of merchants and craftsmen! Why the money that we earned in return of it must be non – allowed one?”

Shakil, who can't persuade Mir Gadir Aga returned back hopelessly.

The World War started. Arakelov, the assistant of police officer, summoned Mir Janpolad. He took Shakil together with him, too. There was crowded in front of the police department. Many of them were the richest persons in the town. They were calling them one by one. Now, it was Janpolad's turn. Arakelov met him respectfully and said: “Aga, Armenian refugees who want shelter from us at the result of the Ottoman Empire's aggression need help. Poor them, they're in a very bad situation.”

Mir Janpolad said ironically:

“And who will help our people, Mr. officer? Our people live worse than Armenians!”

The assistant attentively looked at him:

“It is not time for making a joke, Aga! I don't speak on my behalf, it is the order of the governor. It is the duty of every wealthy man to help Armenian families. For now, I entrusted you three families. They are waiting for you behind the door,” he said and completed his words.

“Everyone must not forget about whom he is obliged. The money you earned are made thanks to us.”

Mir Janpolad understood what the threat was and accepted it in silence. Shakil got surprised from his brave friend's silence.

Two Armenian families were placed at one of the old warehouses. Here, conditions were not so good, but one could live there. They found a better place than the third family. This two – room hut with a small yard was dry and dripping. It has small garden and water well with less salt. Shakil immediately understood the reason for Mir Janpolad's kindness.

This Armenian family consisted of three persons. Husband, wife and teenage daughter. The head of the family, long-nosed and thin man was lost inside his wide gown. The little girl at the age of fourteen was tired, she didn't raise her head, though dresses that she worn one onto another were old and dirty, her lips cracked from the cold was in the colour of ripe cherries. Her long hairs appearing under the headscarf covered her face. All these cannot make a shadow for her beauty. And the young woman was well shaped, though she hadn't beauty, she was attractive and looked at men enthusiastically. Sometimes she was smiling at Mir Janpolad. She wanted to explain something by her eyes.

Nazioghlu Gulu used to carry the necessary things for the family together with two chieftains. They brought three pairs of bedding, copper dishes, food for one or two days, even wood for firing the oven.

Janpolad said to the head of the family: "I think that you can live with them one or two days..." and he released chieftain with his head.

The Armenian who spoke in Ottoman dialect shook his hand and wanted to kiss thankfully. Mir Janpolad didn't allow:

"Man, I am not an Armenian catholicos, that you kiss hand!" he said and asked in a businesslike manner. "So, what can you do?"

The Armenian answered:

"Aga, I can do everything. Our family profession is a blacksmith. And for this we need forging furnace. And my name is Artush."

"Well, Artush, I'll provide you smithy shop to sell tools. With forging furnace you should wait, we'll think about after..." said Mir Janpolad, then he pointed Shakil. "Tomorrow, you'll find this man, he'll show you the workplace where you'll work in."

Artush prevented the chieftain with the hint of his wife who didn't want to go:

"Aga, my wife also needs job" he said.

Mir Janpolad turned back and said:

"It is possible, Artush. Is she able to cook?"

Armenian woman hugged her daughter and stood behind her husband. She had completely opened her headscarf, and her dark-complexioned face was flaming. She behaved coquettishly under the sights of the chieftain and said just like Turkish ladies said:

“My lord, I can do everything. My name is Anush.”

“Then I entrust you to engage in cooking for chieftains. I’ll give you good salary if you serve them honestly” Mir Janpolad said taking his eyes from hers. Artush’s eyes were filled with tears:

“May God protect you, my lord,” he said. “Don’t pay attention to my clothes, I was one of five men in the Ottoman Empire. I had everything, we were living on good conditions. I had a house with garden and all wealth. They deceived us and made us to lose our way, they didn’t allow us to live comfortably, they told us that we had to move to Russia or Turkish would kill us. There, they said to us that the Russian Imperator would help Armenians, give house, and provide them with job and money. All were lies. We were living in miserable conditions so long. If Arakelov were not, we would die of hunger. We lost hopes, we didn’t know what to do after this. I am so happy that I’ve met with a kind man like you...”

Mir Janpolad went to the door getting tired of this talk. Artush whispered with his wife and approached the chieftain near the door, said:

“My lord, my wife asks when she can start working.”

Mir Janpolad suddenly:

“From now on, do cleaning and ordering, have a rest a little bit,” said. “Next day, until midday, I’ll come and we’ll go.”

Artush didn’t want to allow him going out, he added:

“Would be better if my daughter Mara helps her mother, my Lord!”

Next morning when Mir Janpolad entered the house together with Shakil, the family were standing on foot. The woman was also ready and dressed up her daughter. Janpolad asked:

“Shall we go?”

Anush, without waiting for her husband’s consent, as if she was waiting just for this word, stood in front of Mir Janpolad together with her daughter. She got in the phaeton standing in front of the door. The chieftain also took his seat next to them. Shakil raised and sat near the phaeton driver. Soon, they arrived in one of Janpolad’s estates nearby. There was no one but the gardener. He returned back to his hut seeing the new-comers. Mir Janpolad pointing to the guest room said:

“Brother, I entrust you Ms Mara. And I am also coming after showing the kitchen to Mrs Anush” Then he connected new gramophone. “Enjoy the music.”

Anush was not a child, she knew why she came. And she was acting freely. Shakil looked at the corridor, and saw that Mir Janpolad took her not to the kitchen but to the bedroom.

Shakil started a conversation with Mara.

He knew that Mara was orphan, she hadn't mother and Anush was her stepmother. Artush married to a young lady after his wife died. However, he didn't have good relationships with his new wife and he couldn't manage this woman. Not a month passed after their wedding, the priest and the head of the village used to visit often to their house turn by turn.

Mara laughed carelessly and said:

"When Anush was inside together with the priest or the head of the village, I was standing at the door, when someone came, I was making sounds like a hen. After my stepmother saw off her guests, she was giving me a cookie, combing and fondling my hair."

Shakil understood from the conversation that the girl at fourteen got matured very early.

The second year of the war, the life changed its direction. All order and disciplines were lost. The number of starving people was increasing rapidly. One cannot move in the town due to beggars.

Arakelov often called Janpolad and gave new Armenian families to his guardianship. He was assisting without saying a word. Once, Shakil asked Janpolad:

"How it would end, cousin?"

Janpolad didn't understand:

"Cousin, what do you mean?"

Shakil said:

"Look, how many Armenians coming to the city. Wherever you look at, you can see Armenian refugees."

"Right, their number will pass the number of Muslims," chieftain answered ironically.

"They are yet less in number, but we cannot cope with them, if their number increase, how our conditions would be?"

"May God protect us from that day! However, don't be afraid, cousin, they cannot do anything to us," Janpolad smiled.

Shakil shook his head and said:

"Cousin, it is not funny! I am afraid that its end would be bad. They say that Armenians got into another scuffle and killed a lot of muslims in Baku in 1905."

Janpolad agreed:

"Yes, it is true, Shakil, however..."

Sakil interrupted him:

"...but you are under hypnosis, and can't control yourself when you see Armenian girls...can you?"

Janpolad laughed:

"You are right! Passion for women will kill us..."

Artush's family were living thanks to Janpolad assistance, they didn't know about hardship. As soon as the chieftain drove the phaeton to the door, Anush dressed up Mara and made her to go outside. Mother and daughter, without being in a hurry, got in the phaeton looking at the neighbors teasingly. Mara, enjoying a good life, became more beautiful. If we should say truth, Anush was taking care for her stepdaughter necessarily. She didn't hurt her stepdaughter as other stepmothers. No one didn't know why, but she was taking her stepdaughter with her wherever she went. Shakil saw that Mara didn't leave them when Janpolad and Anush entered the bedroom.

He was spending a lot of money for clothes of both of them. He used to take both of them to theatres, cinemas and meetings together with himself.

Recently, Shakil saw Nazioghlu Gulu to walk very frequently around Artush's shop. It interested him much. His friend changed much more during these years. He became a handsome young boy with good and tidy dressing. The dagger and mauser on his back gave confidence to him. He acted very quickly with the gun. As if the previous shy boy without anything went away

and a brave and ambitious young man appeared instead of that.

He was talking with Artush for hours in a small room behind the shop. Sometimes, the Armenian divided the dinner prepared by Mara with Nazioghlu Gulu. Shakil understood the reason for the relationship of his friend with the Armenian.

It seemed strange to him. Calling Nazioghlu Gulu aside, he said:

“Listen, homie, just step away from her, all right? Don’t prevent Janpolad...”

First, Nazioghlu Gulu didn’t confess, then he saw that it was impossible to deceive Shakil, said:

“To speak frankly, my friend, I want to marry to Mara. And Artush also agrees.”

“But don’t you know that Janpolad will not give Mara to you?”

Nazioghlu Gulu said unexpectedly:

“I love Mara!”

Shakil tried to explain to him:

“Gulu, Janpolad has relationships with these women before you. And spend a large amount of money for them. It is unjust that you stand between them.”

Nazioghlu Gulu suddenly cheeked him:

“You don’t interfere!”

“Wait, wait, my friend! Is there no any other Armenian girl? The city is full of them! They’re arriving day by

day from the Ottoman Empire, Iran. Why only Mara?" Shakil tried to persuade him. "'Don't trample down Janpolad for a girl. He helped us to earn money and find bread."

"I want to marry to Mara...' Nazioglu Gulu insisted on.

Shakil got surprised. And the problem was that poor Gulu was at twenty only, he didn't hear about his interest in any woman. He was living alone in his small, but tastefully decorated house. When he was walking in the town, Shakil saw that respected women who saw handsome and tidy Gulu opened their faces enthusiastically. However, he was passing indifferently. Shakil knew accurately that his friend was not interested even in men. Now, he got surprised of his love.

One day, when Shakil was passing nearby, Artush called him:

"My lord, I have a request from you," he said.

Armenian man finally came to the point after talking about different things for a while:

"My lord, Gulu wants to marry to my daughter Mara," he said.

Shakil answered ironically:

"You are the girl's father! It is your business!"

Artush talked frankly without leaving shyness aside:

"But, Janpolad didn't release the girl. Everyday, he takes her to sightseeing."

"You are the girl's father! Don't allow..."

Artush opened his hands aside:

"Mara didn't obey me at all... Maybe, you can do something and talk to..."

"To Mara?"

"You, muddle-headed! Not to Mara, but to Janpolad, he will listen to you. Let him release my daughter. Mara is a child, she cannot make a choice between good and bad."

"Maybe Janpolad himself will marry to your daughter and make her his wife."

"He has two wives, why he needs the third one? He is not sultan who opens an harem" Artush growled. "And also as I disagree, my wife will also not allow this marriage. Help me, my lord."

Shakil stepped back and said:

"It is not my business!"

Artush persuaded him:

"Help me, my lord! Soon, the Russian Empire will be overthrown..."

Shakil advised him:

"You, Artush, don't drink much, it makes you mad."

"My lord, believe me! There will be revolution, everything will be changed. After a while, Baku will be ours. Armenians will live like lords..."

Shakil listened surprisingly to the poor and dishonest Armenian:

“You really say that Baku will belong to Armenians? “

“Yes, my lord, don’t have doubts about it. Imperator has given Baku to us long ago.”

“Don’t speak nonsense, Artush!”

“You’ll see... One day, there will live only Armenians in Baku.”

“But what about Muslims?”

Artush growled:

“Muslims will be removed to Iran...” he said and immediately persuaded Shakil. “My lord, don’t be worry, we’ll not forget our friends who protects us. They will live together with us. No one will touch them...”

Shakil got very angry of this insect having such tongue. He cuffed Artush.

“You are wretched man!” he said.

Shakil went out leaving the Armenian at his place who lost himself from the kick.

The event around Mara didn’t happen silently and caused a conflict between Anush and Janpolad.

“Leave Mara, my lord. You hug, kiss, took care of her, touch her in front of my eye... But she is sixteen, she is still a child!”

“Why child? She knows more than me and you...” the chieftain laughed.

On the same day, Janpolad bought a small house in return of little money. After making some repair works, he gave it to Mara. And he engaged a servant for her. Mara became a mistress.

Not a day has passed after this event, they were so busy that they forgot about love affairs. It seemed that their black days went away. Some chieftains started fighting against Janpolad. No one knew about their enemy relations and its reason, for no reason, fight between them started, people were killed, the shops in the territory were fired. Janpolad's group members started decreasing day by day, some being killed, some of them remained alive.

Janpolad didn't spend his nights at the same place, he was staying either here or there. He didn't say his place anybody than Shakil. God still protected them, they rescued from several shooting.

Their foods were exhausted. One day Shakil changed his clothes and went to the market and bought some small things. He saw that the house where they hid was full of blood. Janpolad's head was cut, and his body was on the floor. It was not single man's action. His friend couldn't

be killed by any person. Either the number of murderers were more and he couldn't withstand with them or they caught him suddenly. Shakil also witnessed one thing. There was a great hole in the corner. However, it was empty. The lid of the hole was laid on the wall neatly. Janpolad used to keep his money in that hole. And the murderer knew about it.

Shakil took Janpolad's dead body to the village. Mir Gadir's beard turned white from the grief of his brother. One cannot endure the elegy of women. Nazi was mourning in such a way that the one who heard her crying would get upset. The woman's face was covered by bloody furrows. When her relatives wanted to move off from the ceremony, Mir Gadir didn't allow:

"She is one of the relatives of the deceased man. Don't do anything."

Shakil buried Janpolad, then he returned back to the city. His small works remained incomplete. He was busy with them. After several months, the Red Commune was established in Baku. Nazioghlu Gulu appeared at that time. He also was registered in the Red Commune. He arranged a wedding party in those difficult times and married to Mara. Shakil went to the wedding without invitation. He saw that the participants of the wedding

which was unfashionable were only Armenians. All of them were armed. When Nazioghlu Gulu saw Shakil his face became dark and shouted at far away:

“Shakil, I make an oath on the bread that we ate together, if I meet you again, I’ll punish you!” and he took out his mauser and fired at his former friend without pointing him.

The bullet passed away touching uninvited guest’s ear and killed his interest for taking part in the wedding party.

Artush was not talking nonsense. Really, Baku was occupied by Armenians. Armenian dashnak groups were standing on the basis of the Red Guard established by the Commune. The Muslim population of the city started to live in difficult conditions.

Shakil was obliged to return back home.

Two months didn’t pass that the area was full of with shepherds pasturing animals. They said that Armenian groups attacked them. At the instruction of Mir Gadir, Shakil gathered the remaining part of Janpolad’s group. Lord also sent notices to near villages. Those who heard about him responded to him. And he entered the barricade and said:

“Guys, now it is time for manliness...”

The preparation which was done on time gave its fruit. Armenians couldn't enter the village. They scattered around fearing with the fire shot. They started founding opportunities, and exposed one or two families to dagger, they didn't pay attention to women and the old, they killed people without differentiating them. They didn't keep no any man alive.

As soon as the Red Guard was collapsed, massacres stopped in Baku. Armenians who lost their guardians scattered around. The democratic republic was established in Azerbaijan, but it didn't last much.

-XI-

The military vehicle of aggressive Soviet Russia occupied the country which obtained its liberty recently. The armored cars directed towards the capital passed Samur river, they bombed the surrounding villages, they made people to fear. The Soviet government was established in such a way in Azerbaijan.

Mir Gadir who was one of the scholars in his time was shaken deeply. He left to be akhund at the mosque. At least he would disobey God. But how not to be sacrificed? The sky and the ground had to be collapsed, the world had to be covered by black, but it wasn't covered. Again, the Sun was shining as before, rivers were flowing, and

the sea was waving. It was such an action everyone could get surprise, no one could know that how God could endure the existence of this structure.

Aga appeared among people rarely. His days passed by in the garden which was far away from the village. He didn't even participate at weddings and funerals. In summers and winters, it doesn't matter, he was taking care of fruits and trees. He was cultivating greens, potatoes and onions. A large part of the family's food supply was formed by his hard work. His wife was ill. His eldest son was teacher at the school. Though his little son was not so clever, he was turning only around the mullah and assisting him in economic works. His daughter, Bibigil khanum married to a man in the village. He was one of the followers of Mir Gadir and he was working at the oil field. His living conditions were not so bad in comparison with others of those times.

The Soviet government couldn't rely on the population of the large village which was twenty or thirty km far away from the city center. When armored vehicles crossed the village and directed towards the capital, five or ten bullets were shot on the soldiers of the Red Army. Immediately after the government strengthened its position, all these were remembered. The men who were in front of eyes were taken to the Emergency Commission by the armed soldiers and there they were questioned.

Aga was also among them. A man with leather jacket was questioning him. The interpreter was a young man with glasses. He was so thin that he would die if you take his nose. Though he was Azerbaijani, he hardly spoke in Azeri. Probably, he studied in Russian. He was sitting at the old writing machine.

The man in leather jacket found his name from the list in front of him. He read all notes without in a hurry. He had squint eyes and blonde moustache. He looked at the religious leader sitting in front of him indifferently. However, he fulfilled the instructions "It is an important task to direct the part of the population who was hesitating to the revolution" which was given by the party committee. He was professional revolutionary. He was Kazan Tatars in origin. He was thinking in two directions and living a life consisting of two sides as he was from the generation of Muslims christened thereafter. So, he was neither Christian nor Muslim. He knew a little about Islamic history. He didn't study for two years in vein at the Faculty of Orient Studies at Kazan University. He would be a great scholar if they didn't expel him from the higher school for his participation in the student movement. His further education was not systemic. That's, he read all that found greedily. He would go wherever the party sends him. Even he took part in the raid on post ships floating in the Caspian Sea.

He was the supporter of using the money obtained from robbery for the revolution. He didn't consider it to be a shame. He was living among workers, speaking like workers, wearing like workers, but he didn't think like them. The security officer indifferently questioned Aga:

"What is your name? Surname?"

"Akhundzada Mir Gadir Mir Ganbar oghlu (meaning "the son of") "

"Your date of birth?"

"I was born in 1870 "

"Your education?"

"I got higher religious education in Tabriz."

"Your profession...'

"Religious leader."

"Your position."

"I don't have any position."

"Are you not a mosque's akhund?"

"I've left this position, I don't go to the mosque any more."

"Why?"

"I don't believe in God anymore"

He gave some questions to Mir Gadir related to the sect after obtaining general information. The security officer didn't rely on his knowledge on this sphere. He was asking questions without hurry. He didn't know much about the sects of Islam.

Though questions seemed stranger to Mir Gadir, he tried to answer in detail:

“Our supporters are called “mukhtari” among the people. My grandfather founded our sect. He studied in Halab and he was well known scientist in his time.

The security officer interrupted him:

“Your grandfather is not interesting for us...”

Mir Gadir took all his courage and caviled at his words:

“The man would never interrupt the words of those who are elder than him. What if you have the power!” – he said.

The interpreter smiled and translated his words with pleasure. The security officer looked at Aga attentively and shook his head as if he didn’t hear his rebut:

“I am telling that you don’t go away from the topic. Speak about your sect.”

“Well, let’s come to our sect...”

” Mir Gadir Aga stroke his beard.

The security officer made him hurry up kindly:

“But tell briefly, I don’t have much time.”

Mir Gadir Aga didn’t extent the talk:

“It is said in the holy Koran that the man was created by God, that’s, God made man free. To get freedom of the man from his hands means to be against God. “Mukhtaris” can be messed up with neither “Baha’i faith” nor Ali’s faith. We don’t move away from the

rules of the Holy Kuran. On the contrary, we require every verse of the Holy Kuran to be fulfilled exactly. Then there will be neither oppression nor oppressor. Everyone will live equally."

The security officer forgetting about his previous behavior interrupted the interpreter:

"Tell him that the communists also think so. We also want to see all workers, labourers, and the poor free. It is the aim of our revolution. We wanted freedom, equality, and achieved them."

Mir Gadir Aga smiled:

"Usually, it is difficult to protect the thing which was achieved forcibly. It is either farm labourer, or worker, or well educated man, or a man without education, or wealthy man, never mind, everyone is born free, but are all worthy of it?"

"Human is worthy of freedom from the time of its creature..." the security officer interrupted him.

Mir Gadir said slowly:

"It is true, sir! However, a slave who found freedom on the outside cannot immediately be free from the slavery inside. It needs time."

The interpreter again asked the meaning of the words expressing time from Aga then he translated it into Russian as he understood:

"Million years?" the security officer asked in a disbelief.

"I said it figuratively...."

The security officer didn't agree:

"If the slave is not released, where he would know the pleasure of freedom?"

Aga shook his head:

"Yes, it is so, however, we cannot give more freedom to the group of people who are uneducated. Its end would not be good."

The security officer looked at this man surprisingly. In the first years of the revolution, when he saw unrest and turmoil, he also came to the conclusion that uneducated and black persons cannot be allowed to act freely as they want. Now, he got confused as their views with the religious leader from the East coincided.

"And this is Wild East! See, what they think about!" he thought.

He asked with real interest:

"You want to say that the freedom of a man must be restricted?"

Aga stroke his beard:

"Yes, I've come to this conclusion recently... one cannot achieve what he wants with instability."

"Do you accept our Government?" the security officer asked directly.

Mir Gadir Aga answered indirectly:

"God created me without asking my wish. It is necessary to accept provided by God thankfully and gratefully."

“Do you agree with our policy?” the security officer insisted on.

“Can our disagreement change anything?”

“No!”

“Then, there is no need for your question.”

The security officer smiled. They didn’t stop Aga anymore and released him. The security officer wrote some additional words on the sealed paper given to him. And smilingly added:

“Aga, it was pleasure to talk to you. If you have an opportunity, come, let’s talk a little. It’s pity that you are religious leader, or I’ll accept you to a group of Bolsheviks. Save this paper well, maybe one day you’ll need it.”

Whether it was related to the paper or for other reason, it was unknown, but Mir Gadir Aga wasn’t touched for a while.

In the twenty first, there was again instability in the village. Armed persons who were gathering food tax entered the houses, estates, secret safe place, warehouses and took all food supply completely. There was mess in one or two villages and the sounds of guns were heard.

The punitive detachment entered the village as if they were waiting for it. The brave men of the village were gathered in the yard of the revolution committee,

in the village according to the list prepared beforehand. The actions of the punitive detachment were free and accurate. It was not difficult to understand that there was a man who knew the village behind these works. They fired a group of rich men and merchants without any court in the mosque square in front of the eyes of people. It became clear that the head of the punitive detachment was Nazioghlu Gulu.

They didn't touch Aga and his family. The paper given by the security officer, really, was beneficial for him or Nazioghlu Gulu would also send him away. He said to Mir Gadir Aga:

"Aga, if I meet you again, read your kalmeyi-shahadat.¹ And, the paper or other things will not help you anymore."

Mir Gadir Aga suggested him to conclude a truce, he said:

"You are sinful in the death of my brother! However, I forgive you."

Nazioghlu Gulu whose eyes were full of blood from his grief shouted:

"I am not guilty in the death of your brother!"

"But who is the guilty?"

"He was killed by the assistant police, Arakelov."

¹ In Islam there are six significant parts of one's religious belief, mostly taken from hadiths (in some traditions, six phrases, then known as the six kalimas. Kalime shahadat is the second one means the shahada (evidence).

“But why?”

“Your brother was womanizer. He took his mistress from Arakelov.”

“However, Shakil says that you killed Janpolad...”

“Let me find Shakil, see, what I’ll do to him. Is he in the village?”

Aga didn’t answer his question. And asked:

“You think Shakil told a lie?”

“Of course! I myself can hardly save my life from Arakelov. I am not your blood enemy, but not also your friend. That deceased made many harms to me. If he was alive, I would kill him myself. And one thing, Aga, don’t complaint, don’t draw your mouth for bloods poured, now the time requires it. you don’t see that blood is being poured instead of water? Who is afraid of blood? If I wish, I would also pour your blood.”

“But you are the representative of the government, how will you breach its rules?”

“Yes, the thing that prevents me to do these acts is the party ticket that is in my pocket. Or who can prevent me to do anything that I want to you?”

Mir Gadir Aga hardly persuaded him:

“Then, let’s negotiate...”

Nazioghlu Gulu said ironically:

“Anything else!? You want to cheat me? The powers entrusted me don’t have limits. Whom I want I’ll cut,

whom I want I'll hung up"" he said and took the mandate out of his pocket. "Look, who signed this paper!"

Aga took the paper and brought it closer to his eyes:

"All of those who signed this paper are the enemies of Muslims, Nazioghlu."

Nazioghlu Gulu worriedly:

"Don't speak nonsense! All of these men are revolutionaries..."

Aga again whispered:

"I don't know whether they are revolutionaries or something else, but the Armenian one whose name is standing in the top of the paper was leading the dashnak army attacking the village."

Nazioghlu Gulu decisively said:

"You are wrong, old man."

Mir Gadir Aga said sorrowfully:

"You are still young, and joined our unfair enemies. You don't know that the world is temporary and disloyal."

"Don't speak in vein, old man. The world of khans and beys is disloyal. The world of labourer cannot be disloyal."

"My son, you are still young, you haven't seen disloyalty yet..."

"Shut up! The world's revolution doesn't need your lectures..." Nazioghlu Gulu shouted. "If you hadn't any right on me, I'll show you! What should I do, you arranged the funeral for Nazi!"

As soon as the punitive detachment left the house, Shakil Gochu who hid in the underground pool which there was no any drop of water in it next to the garden came to Mir Gadir Aga.

His mauser was full. If Nazioghlu Gulu spoke a little bit about something and hurt the Aga's heart, he would pay no attention to his armed policemen, kill him.

"Aga, I am going."

Mir Gadir looked at him sorrowfully:

"So, you run away?"

Shakil didn't step back from his joke:

"Running away doesn't have a good sense, Aga, I don't think it suits me.

Mir Gadir also smiled:

"And what's its name?"

"Aga, it is called to give leg-bail!"

"Changing the name of running away, its essence cannot be modified,"

"Who pays attention to its essence?" Shakil laughed.
"The main point is that head remains in its place, there is no difficulty in finding hat!"

Mir Gadir frowned his nose:

"The adultery boy's arrival made you get frightened much, my cousin. I never imagine that you are so coward."

The chieftain didn't have lost mood from his remark, he said:

"My Aga, if you knew Gulu as much as I, you wouldn't say so. He is God's trouble. It is compulsory for you to hide. Take your wife and children and let's go to the Khizi mountains. There, we have many relatives. We'll stay there until all these mess would end..."

Mir Gadir shook his head:

"Mir Gadir wouldn't run away from those who were born by every adultery, my cousin."

Shakil again tried to persuade him:

"Aga, I don't see any problem of coping with the one who was born by an adultery! Now, he is not alone, he gathered all those who were born by adulteries around him and leads them."

Mir Gadir didn't step back from his decision:

"My cousin, don't hurt me anymore, I'll not leave the village..."

Shakil saw that it's vein for insisting, he changed his mind and said:

"Nazi's doors were closed. Where did she go?"

Mir Gadir said indifferently:

"Nazi died a month ago. We buried her."

Shakil sighed:

"Oh! You ought not to bury her."

Mir Gadir looked at him with strange looks:

“It doesn’t matter how, but her name was temporary wedlock of my deceased brother, I couldn’t act in other way,” - he said. “After Janpolad’s death, she didn’t go out from the house. Once, she said to the mother of children that if Gulu has any assistance in Janpolad’s murder, I’ll not forgive permitted by shariat¹ to him.”

Shakil didn’t stay long, gave his blessings and his eyes were full of tears when he left:

“My cousin, I was taking Janpolad’s odour from you, and now, you’re leaving me.”

The chieftain comforted him:

“Aga, I’ll visit to you secretly as soon as I arrange a place for myself.”

However, Shakil didn’t keep his words, he could return back to the village only after the Second World War.

-XII-

The starvation of 1933 gathered round the whole country. The trouble coming from Russia spread to all provinces. A man came to Mir Gadir. He was Akil, one

¹Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith and Sunna), prescribing both religious and secular duties and sometimes retributive penalties for lawbreaking. It has generally been supplemented by legislation adapted to the conditions of the day, though the manner in which it should be applied in modern states is a subject of dispute between Muslim traditionalists and reformists.

of his former followers living in the district. As soon as he entered the room without any greeting, said:

“Simsar Aga, I am already sinking!”

Mukhtaris used to address each other “simsar”, that meant relative or a distant friend. They sometimes understood it as colleague and supporter. Mir Gadir surprisingly looked at Akil whom he always saw respect and carefully asked:

“Simsar Akil, what’s happened? What is the problem?”

“Comrades” took the last wheat from the well. What else should happen? I had one or two animals, I hoped for them, but they got ill, and we couldn’t save them and they passed away. There is no any food left in the house, children are hungry, they became green from eating greens. What else should happen? Last year, bad days came, there was no any drop of rain, I planted barley, wheat, but none of them grew, everything was destroyed. “Comrades” also say so. They even took the wheat which I’d kept for crop. What else should happen?”

It seemed that simsar Akil became mad. Aga became sad for one of his loyal followers to be on a such difficult condition. Akil was a kind man, he never forgot Aga, he visited to him for several times in a year with gifts. Mir Gadir remembering all these helped him without thinking. Together his little son, they put a bale of barley

on Akil's donkey. His follower who moved into tears from this generosity wanted to kiss his hand, but Mir Gadir didn't allow:

"Simsar Akil, according to our sect, we are brothers, don't do this, you'll be sinful."

Aga's living condition was also not so good, he was also in difficulty. He didn't have any other place to rely on besides his labour. He threw away being akhund, he left the mosque, he didn't arrange religious marriages, he didn't write prayers and accept things vowed.

A week passed after this event. Aga was sitting next to the stove. He saw through the small window two persons rising towards his house. The man in front of the other person was his distant relative Akil. Akhund took the book in front of him aside, and took off his glasses. He wanted to say to his little boy who was wandering in the yard that not to accept those who were coming, but he went outside changing his opinion. Akil entered the yard which was fenced by thorns. After him, a lady wearing a headscarf came in. Firstly, he thought that the thing in his arm was a bag. Then Mir Gadir understood that he was wrong. The lady put the child that was covered on the ground. It was a baby girl at two or three. Akil stood in front of Akhund, said:

"My relative Aga, I brought these children to you. The eldest one is my daughter and the little one is my granddaughter."

Akil's eyes were troubled, his pupils were not standing at one place. Mir Gadir became mad, and shouted at him suddenly:

"Are you crazy, simsar Akil? You think that I am one of those men who kept servants at their house? Can this joke be accepted?"

"Aga, I have no power to make a joke. Someone will serve you at this age or won't? You've been left alone..."

Mir Gadir said with anger:

"It is not your business! In a word, your suggestion doesn't appropriate for our sect and also for the time..."

The guest also shouted:

"Damn such a time!.."

Mir Gadir carefully whispered:

"Slow down, what are you doing, you'll make trouble for me. Don't you know that the earth also has an ear?"

Akil looked at him confusingly:

"Aga, I am going,"

Mir Gadir tried to prevent him:

"Akil, wait, take your children, too..."

Akil pulled his arm out of Aga's hands and moved away silently.

Mir Gadir Aga shocked for a while in the middle of the yard. Then, he's come round, put off his slippers, washed his hands. After he addressed to the woman who was in veil, standing and shivering near the well:

"My children, come on, be my guest and warm a little bit. The day is long, I will think about you. God will help us, don't lose your hope."

The guests came in, the balcony was hot. Mir Gadir Aga showed the low bed covered by carpet, said:

"Have a seat!"

Then he called his son through the opened door:

"Hey, boy, don't stay there, put the meal you brought near the stove, let it be warmed a little...Don't you see we have guests? Be quick!"

Aga's little son came in shyly. He even didn't glance at guests, took the meal pot out of basket and put it on the hot iron stove. And then he asked Aga:

"May I go home?"

"Go, but come back in the evening"

"Ok, Aga!"

Mir Gadir Aga laid the table-cloth on the floor covered by carpet. Took out of the basket food and bread, put on the table-cloth and then poured the hot meal into the plates. He called the guests:

"Come on, take your seats and serve yourselves, good appetite!"

The veiled guest didn't move. The baby covered by worn clothes shivered, licked his lips, but didn't move too. When Aga went out of the room he threatened them purposely:

"If you don't eat, I will switch you!"

Aga was busy in the yard, when he felt cold he returned back to the house. He saw the table cloth to be cleaned, the paltas were washed, the tea-kettle was on the stove, buzzing.

The elder girl had already opened her face, put off her veil, her hairs spread on her shoulders. She was fresh young and her face was thin. She had big eyes. Though she was not so pretty, but she was attractive. She had big breast.

The elder girl was on foot walking up and down, when the owner came in.

She slowly put on veil when Aga came in. Aga saw her prettiness and figure and was sad.

"My child, I am in the age of your grandfather! Feel yourself easy! Our sect says like that! Soviet Government is also taken the side of freedom!"

The baby well fed got sweet asleep on the carpet. Akil's daughter took the baby and put her on the bed.

Aga sat on the carpet ground his legs folded and turned to the elder girl who was standing on foot:

"Take your seat! Don't feel shy before your grandfather!"

The girl sat down and half opened her veil. Suddenly she began to speak. There was a nice softness in her voice, Mir Gadir Aga startled a bit.

“Simsar Aga, I don’t need grandfather. I don’t need even freedom! My father sent me for you as servant! I agreed, because I want to help my family. From now on I will take care of you and serve you.’

The girl spoke clearly, she expressed her thoughts quite correctly. Aga liked her sincereness and said to her frankly:

“My child, I don’t need servant or housemaid. I am enough old, going to die. Don’t dream anymore because of your father’s words. It can’t be like that! I never could think that Akil was a rattle-brained man!”

She interrupted him with her soft voice:

“Simsar Aga, I am not a child, I know what I am needed”

Mir Gadir Aga frowned:

“Young girl...”

“I am not a girl, I am a young widow’

Mir Gadir Aga was confused.

“I didn’t know that you were widow. I thought you were a girl...Did your husband die?”

“No, he was sent to other world!” she answered with anger.

“Why, if it is not a secret?” Aga interested.

"No, it is not a secret! My scoundrel husband was not a quiet man, he was against the government. He joined the light-headed people like himself and prepared rebellion against the Government. And one day the milis came and took him and without court killed them all. My father-in-law and mother-in-law didn't take care of me, they said you were unlucky, go out of our hous... So I came back my father's home. My father had also problem beacuse of his son-in-law, thus he got angry and wanted to get rid of me and sent me to you as servant. And I agreed. Better to be a slave than to live and starve under reproach every day'

"Is the baby yours?"

"No, Aga, she is my elder sister's baby. My sister died and I took this baby to take care of her. She can't stay without me even for a minute!"

Aga thought a bit, then decisively said:

"I will return you back to your father's house!"

She kept silent, then she smiled.

"It is impossible, simsar Aga!"

"Why, khanum? Who can prevent me from sending you back?"

As the old man got confused the young woman laughed aloud and then said:

"Simsar Aga, before taking me to your house my father took me to mollah and made him to register our marriage, now we are husband and wife in front of God! "

Aga bewildered with amazement. His rosery fell down the floor.

"Khanum, don't say like that. I have never taken somebody who can speak on behalf me. I have not given to your father such authority! This marriage is sin!"

The young lady said in a kind way:

"No, that is not possible! Our sect gives this authority to my father. "Each member of the sect is considere to be the other"s advocate; in this world as well as in the other world!" These are your words, aren't they?"

Aga was defeated, fondled his beard.

"Yes, my words. But they have another meaning. I don't want to be bigamous amn, the government will sin me again, but I don't want to be guilty of government..."

"Simsar Aga, that doesn't concern to government. This will be between us, I will know and you, that is all."

Aga stood up.

"All things concern to this government! You won't stay in the same room with a starnger! You had a rest and go away! I will take you back!"

The yopung woman didn't move. Then relaxed and easily opened her veil, threw rapidly her hairs back. Mir Gadir was shaken in front of this charm and ran out of room.

It'll be dark soon. Aga chased the poultry into the hen-coop, then out some grass in front of ass, saw the animal shivering covered the ass with horse-cloth. He walked

along the vineyard long and could not decide what to do after. Akil gave to him such a riddle that he couldn't find an answer for that. Then he whispered "Damn it all!" and came back home.

The young bride laid the table, poured two cups of tea. Put the dried fruit on the table. Perhaps she didn't waste her time, looked the shelves, cellar and basement places and met Aga with the following words:

"Simsar Aga, you're wasting your time in the cold weather, all in vein. I will not leave this house willingly! Come on, have a cup of tea!"

Aga said dolefully:

"I don't know what to do, khanum!"

He sneezed and sat down on the corner of the carpet, took off his socks.

"I don't understand your persistency..."

The bride's cheeks were freshed because of hot. She decisively said:

"Simasar Aga, you can throw me out of your house, but I will never return to my father's house!"

"Well, where will you go then?"

"I will go to the street, tell everybody that mu husband Mir Gadir Aga made me to behave like that."

Aga really feared.

"What are you saying? You will slander me, the old man who is in the same age of your grandfather? Don't you be afraid of God?"

"Human is not afraid of anybody when he was obliged!"

Aga looked at her very attentively.

"You are perhaps educated?"

"I haven't got educated so much, I read a book in arabic, my father taught me. But latin alphabet I studied in the soviet school. I studied five classes."

Aga asked with interest:

"But what happened then?"

"School building was burned. They said it was the enemy's deed! He didn't want our children to get education, to be well educated. The teacher taught lessons in the stables. Then he was bored of giving lessons and ran away. So we remained without teacher, after my father made me to marry, and I forgot the school...'

Speakinf she took the copper wash-basin, poured the hot water into the basin and added some cool water, examined by her finger and then took it to the front of stool near the stove.

"Simsar Aga, come on, sit down and I will wash your legs with warmed water. You have got a cold, you are sneezing!"

Aga was sick of to go against the Fate, he silently stood up and came to sit down the stool, rolled up his hems and put his legs into the hot water.

The bride kneeled and began to wash massaging his legs looked like a peasant's cracked legs.

This touching recalled his memories and shook his heart.

"So I remembered why you looked so familiar. I came to your village five-six years ago, to funeral ceremony. I was at your house, your father's guest. When you washed my legs you tickled my legs. Yes, you tickled and nearly you made me to laugh."

The bride looked askew at him and smiled.

"You actually remembered me. What should I have to do to attract your attention? I served you and did my best to satisfy you...But you didn't pay attention to me..."

Aga was open-mouthed with astonishment and smiled. He asked:

"What is your name, stubborn bride?"

She looked him in the eyes.

"Simsar", she said and looked at him again, "My name is Simsar...They say you called me like that, for the sake of our sect'

Aga remembered.

The World War just started. Akil invited Akhund Mir Gadir aga to his second girl's naming day. The Head of "Mukhtaris" agreed and Aga was a young boy then, and he was in good fig. He was one of the honourable men of the province.

Now he recalled old times and was thoughtful.

"Yes, I remembered, Simsar khanum, I remembered" he said.

The bride leaned forward, her forehead merely touched his knees. She rolling up her sleeves put her hair back. Aga couldn't bear any longer, he put his hand on her head and began to pet it. The bride stood erect, took Aga's dried and hot hand, pressed it on her lips with grateful, and then tears came down her cheeks.

Mir Gadir Aga's grey beard sparkled, his pale lips grown pink like a pomegranate.

The Soviet Government looked at the bigamous as a bad action and it was illegal during that time. There was life and death struggle for the survivals of times passed. Mir Gadir Aga was to fight for justice and truth, and he was not going to marry for the second time during that messed time. Besides, his was old and he was not in the mood of getting married. Life was hard and impossible. But what is fated to happen must happen. He had to obey the fate like a true mouslim.

n some months Aga confessed:

"Simsar khanum, I would like to tell you that God likes me and that is why I will go to paradise. But I never expected that He would gift me Edem in this world. You made me happy...Now I feel comfort and can go to that world "

Simsar khanum's face blossomed out and she said:

"Aga, there is no one who will get from us that world? Better speak about this world. I hardly think about family and future, live somehow, don't tell me about death, it hurts my heart. We must live. It is easy to die..."

"If you gift me a son I will live hundred years..."

Simsar khanum felt shy before him. then said:

"If God permits, I will give birth to a son..."

There is a time for everything, Soon she gave birth to a son. They named him Malikajdar. Mir Gadir Aga forgot his pains since the time when the Soviet Government came. But his heart was anxious. There was no good news coming from provinces. Akil kishi was under arrest sent to Siberia together with his family. He couldn't keep this news from his young wife. Simsar's tears didn't dry. She was so sorry for her little sisters not even for her parents. Aga couldn't comfort her. She said:

"What is my little sisters' guilt? What they have done against the Soviets?"

She cried and cried.

Mir Gadir Aga took care of her old and sick wife too. He visited to her every day and brought her foods. She couldn't speak because of being paralysed fully, but she could hear and see. She watched Aga with scold. She knew of his young new wife, most probably the ekder bride, her son's wife told her. So Aga's sick wife died

soon. It was in winter in 1937. She passed away.

The village got into a panic again in spring. It was really the day of judgement for remained agas, owners and beys in the village. The list of them formed by extraordinary commission by the assistance of Nazioghlu Gulu, who was snitch in the village. Nobody was forgotten in this time. There was howl where Gulu pointed at. He knew well everybody.

Mir Gadir Aga couldn't escape with life and limb this time. The paper which gave to him security officer couldn't help him. Nazioghlu Qulu met him at the police station with great pleasure and it was so strange.

"I just told you, if we meet again your situation will have got worse", getting the paper from Aga and threw it on the ground, trampled down. "You think it was this bloody paper that prevented us to arrest you last time?"

"But what was impeded you?" Aga asked taking the paper from the muddy ground.

"I was told that you buried my mother decently and gave funeral repast. That is what prevented me...That paper is nothing. Throw it!".

"The man who gave me this paper is your boss, isn't he?" Aga asked anxiously.

"He was... But now he is getting rot in Siberia..."

"He was a good man, a just man. What a pity!".

Nazioghlu answered:

“Don’t worry, soon we will send you there too. If you meet him there you will tell him these praises”

“What was his fault?”

“He was counter-revolutionary. There is no mercy for the enemies of revolution...”

Aga gazed on policemen around and asked him in a low voice:

“Do you really serve this godless government?”

Nazioghlu faltered for a while and said:

“Heartily!”

“Don’t tell me a story, I see, your end also will be the same as the security officer”.

Nazioghlu grew black. Aga was right. He felt himself not so easy and thought that the next victim might be himself.

He was moved away from work gradually. He said like an uncertain man:

“Aga, it is just your time!” and turned to milis: “Take him away!” Then ordered them: “Take him to my car, we will talk on the way”.

Aga asked:

“Is it exile?”

Nazioghlu smiled, said:

“Yes, it is! You are quite right!”

“And I have just one last favor to ask you”

“Be quick. We have no time”

"Don't hurt my little son and innocent wife!" and pointed at his wife who stood at veranda in tears.

Nazioghlu didn't look at his wife and said:

"Aga, you should think about it before you married with a young wife, and just have a child too..."

And he ordered the sergeant who was ready to search the house.

"Let's go!"

The sergeant insisted:

"Boss, in accordance with instructions his family must be arrested too". When he pronounced these words known that he was obviously Armenian.

Nazioghlu knit his brows, looked at armenina who was officially under his subordinate. He knew well that sereant informed about his every step to high ranks. But in spite of that he ordered:

"Do you teach me?"

Sergeant was confused.

"Sorry, boss!"

"Well, don't act a real Armenian and don't forget that you are in the muslim village. And remember, the real family of the prisoner is in the village! This is his sweetheart! There is no any line in the instruction about sweetheart. We are dealing with men not women, you know!"

Nazioghlu worked hard and heartily. As he knew well Baku villages he took a hand in everybody who was rich. All operations of the city police took place by his assistance. Everyday he was sending nes prisoners to Siberia.

Mir Gadir Aga who was in prison for the first time became broken. The prison was full of people? And he hardly to find a place for sitting. Some days passed. There was a dead silence in prison. It was broken only three dinner times per day and during walking of the prisoners. There was a confusion in the behaviour of controllers. The usual supremacy disappeared. Something happened.

But after, everything started again.

After temporary silence Mir Gadir Aga was taken to be interrogated and when he came back he met a prisoner with manacles on his hand, at first he didn't recognise him. His face changed out of all recognition. He was Nazioghlu Gulu. Of course, Aga himself was on the way of Siberia, but this moment he seemed to be glad that Gulu was also here.

Nazioghlu Gulu stood straight in front of him, said in a low voice:

""You were right, Aga, life is unfaithful...Look, what they turned me into..."

Prison controller cried:

"Stop talking!" He struck the butt of a rifle against his back.

Nazioghlu was open-mouthed with astonishment and turned to him:

"You strike me, your former boss? But it was you who obeyed me yesterday...What happened to you? You changed very quickly!"

Contorller got angry.

"Cut it out, counter-revolutionary!" again struck the gun against his back.

Nazioghlu moaned with pain, moved unsteadily on his feet. Mir Gadir Aga uprised his head to the sky and whispered: "Thank goodness!" The controller followed him asked and at the same time warned him:

"Akhund, for what you gratitude to God? Speak, bur don't turn behind!"

Aga said:

"That person was my enemy. I watch him to be broken, that is why I thank God"

The controller laughed.

"What about you? You think you are better than him?"

Aga answered with satisfaction again:

"Never lose your hope! Live in hope of life! I have strong hopes that tomorrow will soon be well. You never know what will happen tomorrow!"

But Aga's hope was lost.

When he heard that his all family members were sent into exile to Kazakhstan fields he died in prison.

-XIII-

Nobody touched Simsar khanum.

She was a clever woman and her wisdom helped her to escape with life and limb.

For the sake of her little son and baby in her womb she would put her heart and soul into everything.

She was called to Soviet office of the province. When she heard the death of her husband she displayed fortitude. Chairman of the Village Soviet was a woman. She was ugly but painted her eyelashes with antimony. She questioned Simsar for a long time, but the young woman didn't lose her head.

"Are you Mir Gadir Aga's wife?"

""No, khanum!"

"I am not khanum, I am Comrade. Ok?"

"Ok, comrade!"

"Well, what are you doing in his house? Why you live there?"

"My father gave me and my cousin to them when we were child as housemaid. To serve them..."

"You mean domestic servant?"

"Yes, comrade"

“Why?”

“My father was one of the adherents, that is, followers of Mir Gadir Aga”

Soviet Chairwoman thought for a while, then decided:

“You are almost our friend, worker. You write petition and submit an application and give us. We shall take you to kolkhoz.¹ Don’t you mind?”

“Ok, comrade”

Chairwoman looked at her very attentively and asked:

“Why are you in chadra?² I am also woman. Take off this old thing!”

Simsar khanum fulfilled her order and chairwoman looked with astonishment at her belly.

“Are you pregnant? And where is your husband?”

“I am not married”

“And who is the baby’s father?”

“Aga...”

Chairwoman was beside herself with rage and shouted:

“But you said you were not his wife...”

¹ Kolkhoz is a Russian word, means: a contraction of collective ownership, *kollektivnoye khozaystvo*) was a form of collective farm in the Soviet Union. Kolkhozes existed along with state farms or *sovkhoz*. These were the two components of the socialized farm sector that began to emerge in Soviet agriculture after the October Revolution of 1917, as an antithesis both to the feudal structure of impoverished serfdom and aristocratic landlords and to individual or family farming.

² Chadra, also hijab: the term “hijab” (in Arabic literally “curtain”) has several meanings in present day Azerbaijani language. It designates the Muslim headscarf that covers woman’s hair, ears and neck. It is also used to describe the full dresscode for Muslim women, including headscarf and the rest of the attire that covers whole body except for the hands and face.

Simsar khanum at last concluded:

“Comrade, do you think that raped woman must be a wife?”

Chairwoman was less educated, but this logics made her to keep patience. And she made on the list a mark with blue pencil. It meant that she must have less confidence in Simsar. But they left Aga’s garden house for Simsar. Even the yard that was about twenty-thirty sots they didn’t take away from Simsar. But the other plantation and fields, house in the village confiscated and were given to kolkhoz.

Simsar khanum’s was in a hopeless condition; her life was full of pains and cares. Her baby was born but soon died. She and her cousine began to take care of little Malikajdar. Now she had to live only for the sake of her little son.

Simsar had learnt from Mir Gadir

Aga to be patient. She knew how to plant, grow and breed the trees. She had to keep household, family, her cousine and son.

She worked day and night, went to kolkhoz, came back home and tried hard to keep soul and sound.

The war began, and condition of the family became complicated, worse and worse. This war brought also advantages, people began to forget a lot of things.

Working people at kolkhoz were women, old and invalid persons. Days passed slowly and life was terrible.

Families were in tears, they worked hard in tears, they went to bed in tears.

The war finally ended. But nobody had power to be glad for that.

Simsar khanum hoped only for her son. After the war the talkings that she was afraid of being risen, began to be remembered. They formed a separate brigade in kolkhoz for the families of "People's enemies". These families seemed to be politically unfaithful.

This brigade headed Lame Badi.

He came back from the war as invalid and was so nervous that people feared of him. He hurted women, teenagers and old people. He gave them no rest. So Badi controlled and watched everything.

There was a small heap among the fields. It was out of sight, out of mind.

He didn't go home, he was sleeping there. Sometimes he said: "Victor soldier has right to everything!"

Malikajdar was thirteen. He was small by height, but strong by body. After school he came to brigade to help his mother and fulfil different tasks of adults.

Shakil Qochu was a cart-man in the unit. And a woman Bibi by name was head of the unit. Her grandchildren sometimes came to feed but didn't work. But Malikajdar worked hard, he was silent always.

People in the village knew that Shakil Gochu was dead, but he appeared in the village. Simsar khanum listened to his story and decided to give him stable that became empty for years.

Simsar khanum used shawl and veil for covering her body and face. So she hid her attractive and noticeable body from everybody. That is why she looked old than her age.

Boss Badi didn't pay attention to this quiet and peaceful woman so much. He treated her kindly and sometimes he didn't order her and her cousin heavy tasks.

One day Malikajdar left the school very late. He didn't see his mother among the women in the field. That day his aunt was sick and stayed at home.

The unit team rested under the shadow. Bibi and Tamasha had have dinner

In the shade of cart. Simsar khanum was absent. When people saw Malikajdar they began to whisper. Women called him, Malikajdar pretended not to hear and hid behind the wooden boxes that were piled up

like mountain. He didn't answer the women who called him, but he listened what they were talking.

Later Simsar khanum appeared in her shawl and approached the women and sat down the corner of the table-cloth. Tamasha gave to her a can of ayran¹ and drank it. Bibi asked her:

"What happened?"

"This evil doesn't leave me alone!"

"What he says?"

"He wants me to marry him"

"And you? What did you tell him?"

Simsar answered with anger:

"What wil I say? I told him that I was sick. I have heartache, and I am not going to get married. And I am growing Mir Gadir Aga's son...He says, your Mir Gadir Aga... damn and curse him! Now I am Aga of this village! He says, he is not going to take off my hand from you. If you don't consent I will deport you under guard and send you to Siberia.

"He was right." Bibi grumbled. "He could do it. Look, how many people he made unfortunate!"

Bibi wanted to say something more, but Tamasha interrupted her.

"This woman telling nonsense, she is just windbag..."

¹ Ayran is a super refreshing and healthy Turkish drink. Salty yogurt frothed up to beautiful perfection. It goes perfectly with kebabs and any spicy meal. You need only 3 ingredients and it's ready in 2 minutes.

Tamasha herself liked Badi and that is why she asked Simsar with interest.

“Did he do with you what he wanted? Yes, you, sister, tell me the truth”

Simsar khanum answered with anger:

“God forbid! He will see it in his dream!”

Bibi said:

“You need to tell it Shakil kishi, let him talk to Badi...”

Simsar shook her head:

“Badi will not listen to him! And I am just afraid he will wander Shakil kishi too...”

Badi agreed.

“Yes, right. This scoundrel and lascivious man can do everything that comes to his mind. But anyhow, it is necessary to tell Shakil Gochu”.

Malikajdar gave up his studies; he used to wake up early and together his mother and cousin go to work, didn’t move away. He was in the field all day. His mother begged him not to give up school.

“My son, don’t give up school, and study! If you get education you will be good in life. And you will take us all out of darkness...”

But no use. Malikajdar didn’t

move away his family. When Badi saw him near them he didn’t even look towards them. Everybody deviated from Malikajdar.

Lame Badi was a dangerous man. He could do everything and write denunciation of everybody he wanted.

People called his office kontor¹. There was a cornfield around his kontor.

Malikajdar entered the kontor. The door was opened, most probably Badi forgot the key and went out. Malikajdar was inside and looked at around and saw the notbook where Badi wrote the labour days of each people.

Malikajdar enjoyed the hot room. He went to bed and wanted to rest a little bit and soon slept.

Some time passed and suddenly Malikajdar woke up because of noise outside. He looked through the window and saw Badi with a woman who sat on his croup. There was no time to be hidden and the teenage quickly escaped under the bag, but as there was so narrow he went immediately into the wardrobe.

After a minute drunkard Badi chattering entered the room.

"I have forgotten to close the door again. I don't know what happened to my memory"

"If you want your memory be good don't drink vodka" a woman said.

¹ Kontor continues to mean 'office' in the Scandinavian languages and in Estonian, while kantoor is used in Dutch. Probably from Dutch, and quite possibly thanks to Peter the Great, the word, as контора (kantora), is also one term for 'office' in Russian and Ukrainian.

"Well, what shal I drink then?"

"Drink bakmaz¹ and sweet tea" the woman laughed.

Badi muttered again:

"Heater is also on...Here is hotter than hot-house"

The woman asked:

"May I come in or not?"

Badi said in a rough voice:

"Come on, beloved, don't stay in front of door!"

He did something and the woman whined at once.

"Don't hurt me, please, it aches...I am coming, but promise me that you will not hurt me..."

Badi laughed.

"I promise" and sat on the bed."Come on, sit down"

"I dread you when you are drank'the woman mumbled.

"I have not much drank, don't be afraid. And once more hundred gram... that will do..." he laughed.

"For God"s sake, don't drink, Badi!"

"Step aside!"

Suddenly he went towards wall-cupboard and opened it, take the bottle of vodka and drink a little bit. He cleaned his mouth with his hand and sat on the bed again.

"Come here, come to me!"

Malikajdar saw everything through the gap of the wardrobe. At first this woman seemed to him as Tamasha,

¹ Bakmaz- boiled down juice of grapes, mulberry, etc.

but then he fully saw the woman and knew that she is Durde from the other gardening unit.

After he couldn't be placed everything that he saw in his mind. And he didn't forget for a long time those erotic and voluptuous voices mixed with squeak of bed.

Later Durde went out. Malikajdar waited for tired Badi to be slept. Head brigade turned from side to side for a long time, then his snores were heard.

Malikajdar waited a little bit and wanted to go out of the wardrobe, but suddenly heard the voice of an unknown man outside. The unknown man entered the room with a small dagger in his hand. The man stood motionless for a while and then he hid his gun and took the red-hot iron on the stove. And he thrust and shoved the red-hot iron roller in Badi's ear quickly, Badi coiled up like snake because of terrible pain and rolled down the bed. He moaned:

"Ohhhhhhhh!"

The killer scornfully said:

"Be dead! Honourless!"

Then he took out his dagger and cut his throat. The floor was full of blood soon.

Malikajdar was merely mad of seeing this murder and looking at the killer he fell down in a faint. When he woke he immediately went out of kontor in fear.

Malikajdar was displeased with his elder sons and he didn't hide it. They were from his first wife, their mother died early. Maybe Malikajdar was kind to them. The elder son's name was Hatam, the little one was Adam. Though Aga wanted them to study but they didn't get education. Both of them worked in the village market, one was seller, the other was the head of the market.

They sold many goods everyday. It was forage market and Soviet government forgot this market. The benefit of the market came directly to the sons' pocket.

But this benefit and income seemed to the sons less. Sometimes they spent all the expenditures that needed to market itself.

At last Malikajdar decided to marry his sons but it also didn't help.

Now Hatam joined the people who held meetings. Aga got surprised of that news. Hatam formed a group by the youths of village and took them to the meydan¹.

¹ The period of spontaneous popular movement started since 17 November 1988 in Baku. This date entered to the history of Azerbaijan as National Revival day. That day at the Azadlıg (Freedom) square demonstrations the number of participants passed half a million. At the demonstrations were voiced freedom and sovereignty. Sovereignty-This is the internal life of the country and other countries in dealing with issues of power, freedom. Sovereignty it's the independence of state. Some of demonstrations participants raised up the 3 color flag of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. From government was required to stop the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan. The government was afraid of the progress of the movement in Baku, Nakchivan and Ganja cities imposed special situation and curfew and were sent tanks into the streets. On 4 December in the morning with

His father didn't pay attention to that. He knew that his son was complete man and a day will come he will get rid of this too. But it didn't happen like that. Hatam didn't part meydan movement. He didn't come home for days and they said they lived in tents formed in the middle of meydan. Father didn't understand his son, why he joined the movement, he didn't know. Everybody in village spoke about Hatam aga. He turned into

Freedom herald during the short period.

Malikajdar aga showed his son Hatam the place to sit down face to face to him who entered the room.

He asked:

"What are you doing, son?"

Hatam answered with enthusiasm:

"Dad, we must save our homeland..."

"What is the wrong with homeland?"

"Aga, we are losing our homeland! Armenians occupy our lands, and Russians also is supporting them..."

"When homlend is lost you don't need to go to meetings, but to take up arms."

"We will do that too'

"My son, we came of holy prophet stock! Our wor is to pray, that is all!"

"Aga, you send to people in meydan food secretly, you send wood for fire..."

an armed force last people who spent a night at the square drove away. Many people were arrested. The movement of Meydan (Square) have joined people.

Malikajdar confused.

"How did you know that?"

"Dad, even the earth has ear! I heard that you support the meydan with money too. You think, it is not the truth?"

Malikajdar confirmed.

"No, it is true. Everything is right. But I don't talk in vain on tribune. Because it is not my job. There are another people for that"

"I don't talk nonsense"

"To make people to opposite the government is nonsense..."

"This government must be collapsed"

"Maybe" Malikajdar aga agreed.

" Well, but you went in front of people, do you really know the way of overthrowing the government?"

"We have a man who can show us the way"

The uncle and nephew sitting near Aga listened to their conversation. They kept silence, but this moment Seyfal couldn't stand in and said with reproach.

"Your leader was a worker at the plant named after lieutenant Shmidt until yesterday, wasn't he?"

Mizi laughed noiselessly and Hatam said with confidence.

"There are leaders higher than him!"

Seyfal mocked at him.

"My uncle grandson, we know them too"

Malikajdar Aga said in a soft sound:

"Dear son, to shoe the way you need to be educated.
But you hardly finished the middle school"

"Freedom patriot needs only love of homeland, but
not education!"

"Son, everyone is not born for flying. You can serve
homeland in different ways"

"Aga, I will not renounce my way!"

Malikajdar couldn't bear.

"Go, inshallah¹ you will achieve your wish!"

There was a long silence in the market (stall) after
Hatam went out. Malikajdar's curse amazed Seyfal and
Mizi. The never have seen Aga to be lost his patience.

When Hambaloghlu Rahib came in the room peped
up. He reported pleasing with himself. He talked
without a stop and finished his report as follows:

"In short, this is our the most successful work. General
set up a regulated mechanizm".

Malikajdar's sadness fled away? He smiled, then
Hambaloghlu Rahib asked:

"Aga, may we include in list new people?"

Malikajdar shook his head.

"I think, you may" he first turned to Seyfal, then to
Mizi.

¹ Inshallah is the Arabic language expression for "God willing" or "if God wills".

“What do you think?”

Seyfal answered rapidly:

“As to me we can receive the goods of our friends and send them”

But Mizi said softly:

“It is business, no sense to choose. We may take flower-sellers” goods. That is a profitable market!”

Hambaloghlu Rahib agreed with Mizi.

“He is quite right”

Malikajdar took the side of Seyfal.

“No use to support any of passerby. Even if you see in it profit. My brother”s son, you should tell Seyfal the names who asked for helping. He will make a decision”

Rahib obeyed.

“All right, Aga” and asked with interest.

“Aga, each time I wanted to know: how do you know general Ivanov?”

Malikajdar Aga smiled.

“It is a long history. When I know him he was not a general, he was an ordinary lieutenant”

-XVI-

When Malikajdar was eighteen he was called to the military registration and enlistment office. After his mother died Shakil Qochu controlled his every step. The

old man wanted to follow him to the military office but he protested.

"I will go alone!" he said.

"Would be better me to be with you" the old man insisted.

"What you think, shall we serve the Army together?"

Shakil Qochu laughed.

"Who will take you to the Army? You are too small in height!"

"I will go! You will see!"

Shakil Qochu said nothing. He knew well that men with very small height was not taken to the Army.

Malikajdar was sent by the military office to the milis office for registration. He had to get passport, but he hadn't have it yet. He wrote application, a woman in the office said to him:

"Hey, guy, write your Dad's name simply Gadir, don't show Mir and Aga...My son, would be better you do like that, otherwise you will be hurt"

"But my father's name is fully Mir Gadir Aga, and in my passport it should be written like that. Otherwise I will not get this passport. My father's surname is Akhundzada, but not Akhundov"

"Hey, guy, come to your sense, and don't make mistakes, if you do you will also be arrested and sent to Siberia! Behind your father!"

"My father was arrested not for his name but for his belief and conviction.

He was a man of old time, he thought according to his faith. But I am brought by the Soviet Government, and my sense is soviet sense. Be sure, please..."

Malikajdar's smooth answer made the the business-like woman to confuse.

"Ok" she said, "As soon as the chief comes I will tell him" takinf aside his documents added:

"Come tomorrow"

Behind the woman the chief turned round at the boy's voice. He looked at Malikajdar very attentively. He gave a sign to the woman and the boy's documents accepted. They wrote his name as he wished.

Later he was called up for military service. Malikajdar went to the military office. But commission sent him back home. He was too small in height and doctors wrote on his paper:"He is unfit for duty!" But Malikajdar asked:

"Send me to the military service!"

The experienced military doctor surprised:

"Hey, guy, your villagers are doing much more in order not going to the military service, but you beg us to send you...Maybe we send you to madhouse? Who put this idea into your head?"

"No, I am not blockhead, I just want to fulfil my duty to my homeland".

Doctor laughed and said:

"When you grow up you will fulfil your duty""

"I will grow in the Army! Send me, please"

Doctor said:

"I can't, my child! They will skin me!"

"What should I do to grow high, doctor?"

"Sport and sport...go in for sports and pull yourself up!"

Malikajdar muttered:

"There is no sport in our village"

"Well, find a malberry tree and hung up yourself, stretch yourself! Pull yourself up! Go out, don't hurt me!"

Malikajdar was pulling himself used the malberry tree in the yard for six months. He almost slept in the tree. The real reason was unknown to his cousin but soon she knew the reason and said in regret:

"My cousin, what are you doing? Are you crazy? Your height is low, that is normal, you should be glad for that. Is it necessary to go to the Army? Don't kill yourself!"

Malikajdar didn't answer but his cousin came up to him and whispered: " Your father Mir Gadir Aga

was arrested by this government and you want to serve them, why? Is it so sweet?"

He also whispered:

"My cousin, you are trying in vain. What happened stayed in the past. We can't change the government and we can't return back Mir Gadir Aga. We have to find the middle point..."

n an effort to find the middle point..."

Shakil Qochu also told him not to go to the Army, said:

"Aga, your height is given to you by God. Why you refuse from God's gift?"

"I will go to Army!"

"If something happens to you in the Army, this holy place will be emptied..."

"This holy place prayers will save me, don't worry!"

There was something in this saying and that is why Shakil Qochu kept silent.

Next time when they called Malikajdar to the military office his height longed for several cm. The doctor who knew him well smiled and said:

"Excellent! I knew your father Mir Gadir Aga, you are a good son to him, God will help you! Be careful!"

The doctor stamped his document and send him to army.

XVII

The military units in which Malikajdar served located between Ukraine and Moldova. He was sent to this unit after more or less monthly trainings. They divided soldiers between the different units. They satyed in tents for some times. The barracks for soldiers were building and they would be finished in winter.

The old soldiers hurt the fresh ones from the first days. Sometimes there were fisticuffs among them. There was a khokhol¹ soldier in their unit and he was considered strong “big boss”. He was very fat, about one hundred kilo but he was as quick as monkey.

Malikajdar was a great stayer. He fulfil the orders honestly in time. He liked to be out of sight.

The commander of the unit Ivanov by name was a young lieutenant. He had thin black moustache. The women of the military town loved him. He was a friend of the general commander’s wife.

Ivanov liked Malikajdar for his flexibility, patience and ability and sometimes he praised him among the other soldiers.

One day there was a problem with him. He was on duty that day. The unit was in training. He was cleaning

¹ Khokhol is the stereotypical Ukrainian cossack style of haircut that features a long lock of hair left on the otherwise completely shaved head, commonly sprouting from the top or the front of an otherwise closely shaven head. It is commonly used as an ethnic slur for Ukrainians.

the tent and suddenly that fat khokhol came in and threw muddy boots into the cleaned tent and ordered Malikajdar:

“Hey, black boy, take my boot and clean it! It should be as clean as mirror”

Malikajdar glanced at khokhol who stayed in front of him confidently. He was more taller than him. But Malikajdar took his boot and threw it directly to the olda soldir”s face and it happened so fast that khokhol didn”t expect this heavy blow. The strike was strong and his nose bled at once. Khokhol sat down. Malikajdar looked at his eyes directly.

“Don’t get tangled up with me! If you do I will kill you!” and he showed his forefinger him, and added:”Like that!”

The old soldier was not afraid of blood and strike of the boot, he feared of the undersized, shortish soldier”s eyes. He took his boots and when he went out of the tent, turned and gumbled at Malikajdar:

“You will see, I will bury you alive!”

But bad things were not happened. Khokhol was not rancorous and when he got demobilized the unit wanted to see him off and formed to say him good-bye. Khokhol stood in front of Malikajdar and suddenly he took his belt and very easily raised him up to head, said:

“That is the real man among you!” and then put him down the ground.

Around the unit there were two or three destroyed villages. After german occupation the scenery of the territory was terrible. The onlu uninhabitants in the villages were women and children, so there were no human resources to rehabilitate demolitions of the populated areas. The another point was the widows and single women, they were alone and longing for caress, endearment and kindness of men.

The women were the part of the units.

The soldiers really enjoyed greatly the plenty of women. And the women convinced the soldiers of the truth of theirs words. Each woman had her own history. They told that germans could kill, could fire and hurt but they didn't enjoy to intimate relations. They were not interested in beautiful women who lived under a very bad condition and fear.

In short, military unit which was ful of young soldiers and officers attracted not even young women, but also the old ones.

The war ended long ago. But supporters of the general Bandera still was hiding in the forests. They sometimes rubbered and smuggled the the villages and killed

the active persons of the soviet government and milis officers.

As soon as incident or any extraordinary accident happened the patrol service carried out by the order of commanders. They searched step by step all the forests around. Malikajdar included in this group. He was very watchful and didn't want to be targeted by an armed robber's bullet. The people who were killed during the war have been already forgotten, but one who was killed by a bandit absolutely would be forgotten. Who would remember them?

They met a small hamlet in the deep of forest. All the small fired hamlets were overgrown with moss; but there was smoke coming from one hamlet. One of the soldiers by the order of the commander lifted to the smoke-duct and covered it with rag. In a few minutes a cough was heard inside the hamlet. The door opened at once and two teenagers coughing went out. The clothes of the teenagers were worse and soldiers felt sorry for them. Each one gave them something and the children warmed up.

The group started to come back. Malikajdar was behind the group and suddenly he heard the talking of teenagers, they spoke each other in different language, it was not Russian.

Malikajdar heard Turkish words and immediately turned back. They seemed to him to be Azerbaijanis. But soon he knew that they were Gagauzi. They were Christians. The surname of them was Baltachi. Malikajdar was delighted and enraptured with it. When they parted Malikajdar promised not to forget them.

He undertook visits as appropriate to their hamlet in the forest and Gagauzi boys were glad to see him.

One day commandewr of the unit Ivanov called him.

“You are appointed as an assistant to commander”s wife. You can start new job tomorrow. All tasks that she orders you will do”

Malikajdar told Ivanov everything about the orphans in the forest and wanted to get permission to help them. Ivanov laughed.

“You may get permission from commander”s wife. I think she will let you. She is kind hearted woman”

The burnt house had to rebuild. But Malikajdar hadn’t the opportunity, if he could have been chief... But he put their basement in order; his soldier friends supporte him to cover the roof of hamlet. As he was assistant commander”s wife the unit tailor sewed the garments from the old uniforms of the soldiers for those teenagers. And sometimes the children came to the unit,

they improved, opened as flowers. Malikajdar gave them the commander's remainders of the food.

Near the autumn he repaired their bathroom too. He did his best as much as possible and created for the all condition to live normally.

The elder boy's name was Teddi, the little one was Savva.

Brothers seemed to be in the same age. The little one liked to talk and communicate with people. He was twelve.

But Teddi was pighead, kept oneself to oneself, in short he was unsociable. He was almost fourteen or fifteen. Savva was afraid of him. When Teddi raised his voice he feared.

They didn't like to speak about their parents. It seemed they kept something from people.

After a long conversation Malikajdar knew that the children's father joined the Benderovs' band. After war he wanted to give himself up to the government. But his friends didn't let him go and killed him and burnt their house too.

The family lived in hamlet and more or less kept their soul and sound. They even breded hens, cow and pigs in their yard. But last year their mother went to forest and didn't come back. After that the children remained alone.

The wife of commander was the youngest, she almost didn't interfere in Malikajdar's job. Soldier kept clean the wooden house and around. Gave them food in time, took the ironed clothes from laundry. That is why when he disappeared for two or three hours she didn't pay attention and said nothing.

Once Malikajdar went to forest again.

Savva shook his hand from distance and Malikajdar asked;

"Where is Teddi?"

"He went to lake. He said he wanted to swim..."

Lake formed by rain and there were bushes and reeds around the lake. There was no sound around. An apple tree had grown on the shore. There were clothes under the tree and Malikajdar knew that Teddi was in the lake.

Malikajdar climbed the tree, he watched the lake. But nobody seemed there. And he wanted to get off the tree? But suddenly he heard splash in the lake. He looked at the direction where came voice from. He saw a naked girl coming out of water. She was really looking like a water-nymph. He could hardly stand in the tree. She was beautiful and nude. But he hardly beleived that she was Teddi. It turns out Teddi was a girl...But he always saw Teddi in a rough male rag and worned clothes. Teddi's face was always muddy, hairs were cut like a boy. He never imagined that Teddi would be a girl.

Teddi wiped up herself slowly by slowly and put on her dress without haste. During all this time Malikajdar sitting glued to the tree was even feared to breathe. Suddenly he heard her laughing.

"Hey, crazy soldier, why are you standing like a monument? Get off the tree..."

Malikajdar could hardly mumble:

"Teddi, you were just a boy!"

Teddi laughed aloud.

"I was always a girl, but your eyes have been closed, you didn't see"

Yelena was very kind to him. He was unaware as to the reasons for what was occurring. He put the spade on the ground and approached her who was sitting on the swing in front of the wooden house and asked:

"Mem, shall I ask you something?"

Yelena startled with that and looked at the soldier who was not unsocious usually.

"You frightened me!" she smiled and added: "What do you want?"

"You are so kind to me that I don't know how I will return back to you..."

Yelena stopped the swing, said:

"I have relatives in Baku"

"Yes, you told me"

"Years ago my mother sent me to Baku, to my aunt. I spent my summer holiday in your city. I have been in the Caspian sea and lived unforgettable days..."

"I didn't know that"

Yelena looked him in the eyes.

"Do you have a brother?" she asked suddenly.

"No, mem."

"You remind me of someone. I got acquaintance with him in Baku. There was an armenina old woman Anush by name, she lived in the neighbourhood of my aunt. That fellow was a grandson of Anush. He was tall, stumpy and wayward a little bit. Sometimes he came to the yard and got things into a muddle. He didn't know what was fear..."

Malikajdar startled with the news.

"Was he Sani?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, yes, it was Sani by name. Do you know him?"

"I have met him" he answered.

"Last year he came here" Yelena laughed.

"Did you write to each other?"

Yelena was amazed at his question.

"No, no, surely. He got my address from my aunt"

"And why did he come here?"

"He didn't say"

"Was he alone?"

"No? he came together with his two friends"

"What were they doing?"

"They also sometimes disappeared around the forests and hamlets like you"

"Was he visiting to you?"

Yelena answered proudly:

"He came to military town two or three times. He knew that I haven't focused on him, took offense and left.

There simply could not have been any other way. I am a married woman. I wouldn't be able to recover the old relations." She said and changed the topic. "Sani told me that his father was revolutionary"

"His father was a villainous person, not a revolutionary! And that is why he was shot!"

Yelena examined Malikajdar.

"And what about your father?"

"My father was a religious fugure. He was shot by Sani's Dad"

"Oh....That is it!" Yelena hesitated and asked again:

"And what is the reason of your similarity?"

"God knows! We are from the same village!" Malikajdar didn't keep the word from her. "I guess, Sani is in prison"

"Oh, therefore, I haven't got news from him in ages."

Malikajdar did his duty hurriedly. Yelena watched him and got surprised of him doing all tasks hurriedly.

"Soldier, what is wrong? You're in a hurry to get somewhere?"

"No, mem. I am ok. Don't worry"

"There is a light on your face, soldier!" Yelena probably hinted. It looks like you're going on your date!"

Malikajdar didn't answer and took the spade and moved away and waited for the moment when commander's wife entered the house.

He left the unit as soon as possible. He hurried the forest. He wouldn't know why he was in a hurry. The girl was looking forward him. They met and went into the basement. Teddi wanted to embrace him but he didn't allow.

"Your brother can come in!"

Teddi comforted him:

"He will not!"

"Why? How do you know?"

"I have told him everything." She smiled.

"I told him that I love you"

They looked at each other for a moment, Malikajdar's hesitation fled away when he saw the girl's small round breasts like a fist of child. It seemed to him that her naked beautiful body is the gift of God and he accepted it. And he accepted the gift of fate too.

Time was flying. He looked at his watch.

"Darling, I must go!" he said.

Teddi got off the bed.

“Will you come tomorrow?”

Malikajdar answered in confidence:

“I will come everyday”

But Malikajdar got into difficulties, he didn’t come. Their unit woke up that night by an alert. All the unit were on the highest military alert. Early morning they were taken to the railway station after short training. They were put on the goods wagon and locked the doors.

They wouldn’t let them back, so they stayed at wagons.

Malikajdar was afraid of losing Teddi. He took out of his bag a sheet of paper and write to his beloved a short letter: “Dear Teddi! We are sendd to the unknown direction. Wait three or four months, if you see that theres no newes from me, then go to Baku, they will take care of you and your baby. I love you. The address in Baku is as follows...” He finished the letter and looked through the window and saw Ivanov in front of the last wagon, was so glad... He begged the sergeant to let him for a minute to go out, he gave his last food portion to him and went out. Ivanov became captain, he was appointed deputy commander of the unit for home front. Segeant approached to captain Ivanov.

“What do you want?” he asked the sergeant.

“Comrade captain, this soldier says that he has an important news for you” he showed Malikajdar.

Ivanov said:

“Let him come on!”

And captain ordered Malikajdra who hurried up to him.

"Be quick? Tel me what do you want? I have no time..."

"Commander, are you staying here?"

"Yes, bu quick, the train is going!"

Malikajdar told him the situation in a short way and requested to send the letter to Teddi.

Capitain Ivanov reproache the soldier and said:

"O, you find any time to get married?" and promised him to take the letter to her. "Don"'t worry, I will give to your beloved this letter!"

Malikajdar relaxed a little bit and thanked to Ivanov, went into the wagon.

Like he already knew what was going on: they were trained to Hungary.

Near the city of Budapest the train stopped. The soldiers marched out of the waggon.

It was maden field canteens, shaered food among soldiers and everybody lined up and deputy commander for political affairs made a speech in front of unit.

"There is sort of a counter-revolution that is going on in Hungary. The Soviet Government carring out its international duty came to help Hungary according to the Hungarian people"s request. Forward to Communism of all over the world!»

The Hungarian people who rebelled and wanted freedom was stormed by Soviet soldiers who were deceived. The soviet soldier not understanding anything fired when he was commanded, killed when he was ordered. After years Malikajdar recalled his service months in Hungary like a dream.

So in two-three months Budapest was calmed. The Hungarians were beaten black and blue by the Soviet Army and they became as meek as a lamb. But the situation's still not out of the woods. There was a secret rage in calmness and kindness of hungarian people.

A curfew was introduced in the town of Badapest.

The soldiers even forbidded to go out alone in the day time. They patrolled in the streets and prospects by groups.

Malikajdar remembers the last duty very well. The soldiers kept wathch in front of the high building. There was written "RATUSHA|" on the door of the building. They finished duty by nightfall. Everybody was so glad that they were safe and sound. But sauddenly there was a strong explosion and the building destroyed immediately. One of the towers of the building fell over the soldiers. Some of them died, some of them wounded and one of the big stone fell over the head of Malikajdar. He fell down the ground. They knew him to be dead and took him to the tent where gathered dead bodies of the soldiers. His name was included to the list of deads.

He stayed motionless there until morning. But fate smiled at him. In the early morning he alived, regained consciousness; when he dangled along the tent the watch soldier was afraid of him.

He was in the military hospital for several months and then komission didn't let him go back to the military service and he was demobilized. He head was spinning all the time. Sometimes he remembered Teddi but as felt himself bad he often forgot her.

-XVIII-

Malikajdar was brought back to Baku by a military feldsher. The train reached the city in the evening. Feldsher took the soldier to the military Comissariat handling him to the officer returned back.

The duty officer called to the district Comissariat and took the soldier into the car, sent him to the village. Malikajdar was handled to his family.

Shakil Qochu met Malikajdar with pain in his heart. But he didn't lose his hope, immediately began to find the way of recovering Malikajdar. He tried to find a good doctor, he even took him to the woman who was dealing with quackery. And soon Malikajdar has been restored to consciousness.

Later when he was full recovered Shakil Qochu said to him:

"Let us marry you, my boy! It is time to get married..."

"No, I can't... Are you joking, my Dad?"

"Why joke? It is my honest word, true word! You must! You must get married!"

Malikajdar gloomed.

"Forget about it, come on. I'm looking out for my own health now".

"But, listen to me, my boy, agree and don't deny me, my boy!"

Malikajdar laughed.

"Dad, maybe we get you to be married? - he joked. - You are more flexible than me. Your wife will take care of both of us..."

Shakil Qochu became serious.

"I will give you to a very good girl that she will take care of you better than me..."

"Who is she?" Malikajdar interested.

"Your cousine!"

"Dad, she was close to me like a mother!"

"Never mind! She will take of you like a wife!"

"But she is sick!"

"Even a sick person has right to be happy! But don't be afraid, the sick persons like that live hundred years!"

"O My God! But I don't love her!"

“Love comes after marriage! You are not Majnun,¹
And she is not Leyli!”

“Qochum, it is still early. I have to find the way to
keep my soul and sound”

“But God will give you bread, Aga. You should be in a
hurry. The hearth of Mir Gadir Aga must not be emptied.
Nobody knows tomorrow what will happen...I am off-
spring and have not a child. You are the only man who
can continue the stock... I am so old, and you returned
from military service like half-alive. That is why don’t
deny, follow my advice...”

So Shakil Qochu’s quackeries, his wife’s kind
and hot cares, and the doctor’s medicines recovered
Malikajdar completely. Now he was working in the yard,
carried out small tasks and he had another everyday
duty: he was looking for his new-born son Hatam by
name. But he didn’t take the child in his arms, he was
afraid of falling the baby down the ground. When he
was excited his illness came back, his head was spinning
and merely he lost his mind.

One day Malikajdar told Shakil Qochu everything
happened to him in the military unit. He wanted to get
an advice from him. The old man knew what was love
history, he asked Malikajdar many questions, and
when he analysed for himself, he made his point:

¹ Layli and Majnun is an old story of Arabic origin, about the 7th-century Najdi Bedouin poet Qays ibn al-Mullawah and his ladylove Leyli bint Mehdi (or Leyla al-Aamiriya). “The Leyli-Majnun theme passed from Arabic to Persian, Turkish, and Indian languages most famously through the narrative poem composed in 584/1188 by the Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi, as the third part of his *Khamasa*.

"If your beloved came shou would come up today. Perhaps she changed her decision. Forget," he advised.

"I can't forget" he grieved, "who knows, maybe I have a child from her"

"What do you think, you want to go there and take her to Baku?"

"If she agrees I will take her to Baku. We promised to each other..."

"Don't trust in women's word, Aga!"

"Bu if you knew her you wouldn't say so"

"And you don't care that what would say to that your halal¹ wife? Maybe we consult the matter with your cousine too?"

Malikajdae disappointed and made an aggrieved look at the old man. The old man pitied to the guy, said:

"Well, ok, let me think what shall I do..."

It didn't cause a scandal. The old man told Malikajdar's wife the story in a nice way and she agreed in tears and said:

"I promised to give my life as a sacrifice for you, Aga! Do as wish as you like! I will accept it!"

Malikajdar didn't expect that answer and he got very excited and suddenly lost his mind and fell down.

She was pregnant, expecting her second child. It was hard for her to watch the first baby and her husband and

¹ Halal, also spelled halaal is an Arabic word that translates to "permissible" into English. In the Quran, the word halal is contrasted with haram (forbidden).

at night she made bed for men in veranda. She thought if she might be needed some help they would together do it.

Malikajdar woke up early morning. The ray of sunshine was to beam the little window. He put on the clothes and turned to Shakil Qochu, said:

“Let’s go”

“Where are we going?” the old man woke up too and asked.

“Teddi has come, Dad!”

The old man wanted to joke but when he saw bright face of the guy he really confused. There was a light on his face and it was that light that he waited for years, it looked like Mir Gadir Aga’s light.

Malikajdar took his walking-stick and said again to the old man:

“My grandpa called me in my dream all nights, let us go!”

Shakil Qochu said nothing and followed him.

They moved away from the village path a little bit they met a child. He was one of the children who pastured cattle around the place for pilgrimage.

“What is the matter, child?” Shakil Qochu asked.

“There is a Russian woman in the pilgrimage who asked for Malikajdar Aga...”

As soon as Malikajdar heard his words he ran away to pilgrimage throwing his walking-stick.

Shakil Qochu freezed for a moment and then he turned his face to the Qibla¹ and made a salawat.²

- XIX -

Twenty years ago when his stepsister Bibigul gave teenagers Seyfal and Sarraf to him for his protection she said to Malikajdar:

“Aga, you know that my grandchildren became fatherless, they are orphans. It is village, the people can gossip. An I am afraid they will join bad people and be spoiled. You duty is to take them under the paronage and take care of them...”

His step sister was controlling woman, and icy. She was not happy with her single son, he behaved not like a Sayyid.³ It seemed he looked like his father. He flipped out for nothing and took sometimes the knife.

¹ The Qibla is the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays during ṣalāh. It is fixed as the direction of the Kaaba in the Hejazi city of Mecca. Most mosques contain a wall niche that indicates the Qibla, which is known as a mihrāb. Most multifaith prayer rooms will also contain a Qibla, although usually less standardized in appearance than one would find within a mosque.

² Salawat is a plural form of salat (Arabic) and from the root of the letters “ṣād-lām-wāw” which means “prayer” or “salutation”.

³ Sayyid or Seyyid is an honorific title denoting people accepted as descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his cousin and son-in-law Imam Ali through his grandsons, Hasan ibn Ali and Imam Husseyn ibn Ali, sons of Muhammad’s daughter Fatimah and Ali.

He was often put in prison and known as Gara Sayyid¹ in the criminal world.

When he was in prison he met there Sani who was criminal as well and they went into opposite sides, got in a fight several times. At last one day in the village they recalled old hostility, Sani was quick and killed him.

When her son was alive Bibigul khanum didn't recognise Malikajdar as the heir of Mir Gadir Aga. Nobody could make her understand it. Even Shakil Qochu couldn't explain to her the situation. But fate fate is the true master of us all. When she lost her son Gara Sayyid she was reconciled with her step brother Malikajdar and recognized him as the only heir of Mir Gadir Aga.

Malikajdar said nothing to his step sister and so he became the leader of the tribe and a respected man in the family.

He took his sister's grandchildren to his house.

Years passed. The legend was created in the village about the brothers' loyalty to Malikajdar.

-XX-

At the beginning of the 1980s, Seyfal had to take the heavy toll in the family upon himself. Malikajdar was

¹ Gara Sayyid here Gara is a nickname, means a big person.

ill. The wounds that he got in army began to suffer him again.

It was during this period that Sani's people have become emboldened and been out of the water too long. Even they didn't respect the sacred places. The end of the confrontation should have been the war. Mizi formed two groups of fishermen, one of the groups was given to Sarraf, the other one was given to his son Bij Abdul. There would be bloodshed but this moment Seyfal's ability appeared. It was a good use of his skills. With one bold manoeuvre he changed the course of the situation, left behind himself Sani.

It happened as follows.

Lotu Fakhi¹ who was his father Gara Seyyid's friend, was in prison called "Turshulu". He was convicted and sentenced for life. But Seyfal visited to him during holidays, took to him food and fruits sometimes. There was a time when Lotu Fakhi got back of Gara Seyyid's corpse from the prison's inspectors and submitted to his family. No one of the family could ever repay such a debt and Seyfal remembered it well.

Though Lotu was sentenced for lifelong he was acting as free in prison.

Ha had earned a measure of trust from thieves in prison and as such, he was asked to control the kitty of thieves.

¹ Lotu is a nickname, usually given to a fancy man; rogue; swindler, cheat, knave, old fox; and a convivial fellow

Even among the leading the prison his opinion carried much weight.

He met Seyfal like a close person and listened to his story, then said:

"I couldn't go against Sani, he will kill all our kind".

Seyfal stung him:

"You, called gunsels criminal! But you are coward!"

But Lotu Fakhi didn't pay attention to his biting irony.

"But I will help you in other way", he said.

Seyfal confused.

"How?"

"You know, my brother's son, last month there was an agreement between legal thieves and dealers in Sochi. I was invited to also"

"You mean, you were in Sochi recently?"

"Yes, sure! What's extraordinary about it?" Lotu prouder, then added:

"I may get out of prison any time I want. It is enough my one word to let me out for one or two days"

Seyfal got surprised.

"And, don't they be afraid that you might run away?"

Lotu laughed at his naive.

"It is impossible! I wanted to control the kitty. I can't lose the trust of my brothers. My flight is worse than death!"

“Ok, let’s talk about Sochi” Seyfal said.

Lotu continued:

“According to Sochi agreement a dealer who gives some shares of his income to the kitty he would be under the protection of that kitty, and no one of the thieves may hurt him”

Seyfal wanted to analyze.

“What do you mean saying “a share of income?”

“It is not so much loss for you, brother’s son! The charity box that you put outside of the stall... if you give to them, I mean to the kitty, some money from that box to the kitty at least once per year, it is enough! It is a kind of endowment and donation”.

“You say, Sani would never come close and never interfere in our affairs?”

“Sani can’t break the agreement” Lotu assured him. “But he can secretly do something, but he would never act openly and be hostile to you.”

After recovering Malikajdar knew about Seyfal’s visit, thought over the matter a little bit, then approved his way of acting; he said:

“You have done a job that was impossible even for the army!”

The heavy news came up from Baku. The situation in Russia was not also stable, even Krasnoyarsk, the provincial town was boiled.

Khalis didn't understand what was going on. His Armenian classmate suddenly started venting about the process and it seemed this coward guy was changed immediately. He discussed the prospects for a union, freedom and independence, he talked about history. Once the history discussion turned into national insult. Khalis got nervous and beat him using his fist. That guy's nose bled. He just admitted his mistake regarding his classmate and knew that it would be finished. But fist discussion ended for him very bad. He was dropped out of the institute. But he calmly accepted it.

Khalis reached Baku in two days. He hurried up to his brothers who came to meet him. First, he greeted Hatam, then Adam. But he greeted gloomy Seyfal who stood behind, unwillingly.

They didn't wait for baggage a long, after getting baggage they went into the large yard of the airport and the brothers took him into the RAF.¹ Seyfal was riding. Khalis Aga looked around willy-nilly. Except brothers there was nobody. He miled and knew that his father didn't like bombast.

¹ RAF is a Russian model minibuss or passenger car, a little bit bigger than a small passenger car

"What brings you here at a time like this?" Hatam asked.

Khalis understood that his father didn't tell them about his dropping out of the institute. Simply answered:

"Russian newspapers wrote about the bloodshed in Baku. I was worry and therefore I arrived".

"It is Russian habits, they can blow this out of proportion like they always do"

"Just what is going on really?"

Hatam fully answered.

"Do you know that for sure?" Khalis got surprised.

Adam laughed.

"Now our elder brother is a big person...He is one of the leaders of the people's movement"

"Did he join the protesters?"

"Well, didn't you know? Our elder brother now is standing near Nemat in tribune..."

Khalis interested.

"Is there a meeting today?"

"There is a meeting everyday. Meydan is not emptied"

"And Government? It doesn't disturb?"

"The Government does not interfere even he wants... he can't"

"But what's to become of us?"

"It's got a bad ending. They will make it so the people will be shot.

" Hatam gloomed. "Kremlin won't let this like that! Russian soldiers will kill people!"

"What does Aga say to your joining the protesters?"

"He is quiet for now".

"He is not happy about it?"

"Maybe!"

"Aren't you afraid of his wrath?"

"I am 35 years old, brother! It is not time for me to get feared of parents!"

His arrival was greeted with celebration. The large yard was boiling. Adam's kids didn't even let their uncle rest. Seyfal's children also asked him a lot of questions. Neighbors came to meet him. Khalis's old friends, peers and close villagers sat near him up to night.

At last at the end of the week he found opportunity to sit with his parents and talk a little bit.

Khalis listened to his parents with a smile on his face. He didn't interfere in the talks between mother and father. As he returned back his mother Tidora khanum was very sad and she used to repeat the same sentence everyday:

"What about his future, Aga?"

He was expelled from his last year and it was not difficult to restore him to his institute. But his son be against it Malikajdar immediately will be in anger. But it was the mess time for Russia too. Therefore he wouldn't

want his son to return back to Russia. He even didn't pay attention to his wife's mourn. He said:

"His future would have been well indeed!"

"What will he do in Baku? If he stays in Russia, we don't worry, maybe he could find the way to happiness!"

"Why not in Baku?" Malikajdar looked at the face of his wife where disappeared all her beauty.

"But we don't discuss Baku, Aga!" said Teodora who was called like that according to Christians when she was born, after she accepted Islam and called like Tidora. She asked in a soft irony:

"I would like to know about my son's business here. What will he be busy in Baku?"

Malikajdar Aga didn't pay attention to his wife's irony, he said in a soft way:

"He will be busy with the same job that I am doing"

"I don't see the good end of your job, Aga! Our son must do a worthy job and take a fitting place in the society"

"Khanum, you are mistaken! Time says that the most worthy job is my job that I carried out" he changed the tone of his voice a little bit.

"I have nothing to say, Aga. But Khalis is not a little boy. Maybe would be better to ask him? Let us know what he is thinking?"

"I don't limit to his wishes. Let him decide himself!" Malikajdar Aga concluded the talk. The they waited for the answer of their son. Khalis said:

"I will stay with my father, mummy!"

"And what about your high education?"

"My high education is my father's school, mummy! His life knowledges are better than hundred institutes!" He smiled and sat close to his father.

Malikajdar by common consent embraced his son who was taller than his father, said:

"Perhaps, I gave you a good education, son! But it seemed to me the strange country already changed you."

Tidora khanum didn't show her dissatisfaction, left them and went to the yard.

Khalis began to speak when they were alone.

"Dad, you know everything. Don't you know by chance why I am expelled from the institute?"

Malikajdar lighted a cigarette, said slowly by slowly:

"That was my deal! Now you make a decision"

Khalis got shocked.

"Dad, you didn't have to deal that! I always wanted to stay with you. The fortune of the family is my fortune!"

Malikajdar warned him:

"There's no way back, son, like in a plane."

"I am not going to go back!"

“The peculiarity of our job is that many people derived benefit from our deeds. Though our earnings are much. Our expenditures are also much. We have friends and enemies and they are looking at us. We involved in this job too many people. We have no right to make mistakes. We can’t let our enemies to overcome us”.

Khalis shook his head.

“It is clear, Aga. But I don’t understand one thing’

“What do you mean?”

“I want to know, many people come to you, they all ask to help them. And sometimes you ask the unknown people to solve their problems. You are spending even money for that. And don’t get a cent from anyone. Even mountain would melt in front of these expenditures...”

Malikajdar began to speak in a low voice.

“Our family stock was well-known. This fame make me to be responsible for everything. Our fathers and grandfathers helped the people, they gave them gifts and portions, but didn’t get a single gift. We are seyyids. You have to stand near me tonight. I asked him to acquaint you with all things.

Tidora khanum was out in front of the house walking in thought. When she saw Khalis coming out of the house she took his hand and said:

“I want to tell you my life history, son!”

Khalis knew his mother as a woman leading secluded life. He confused a little and said:

“But is it necessary?”

“Yes, my son, yes! When you hear my history, I think you’ll understand all and you will be one leaping to conclusions”

Teddi used to go to the unit for months because of her beloved; she couldn’t bear his faithlessness. She was pregnant and changes in her uterus bothered her. Her belly was growing day by day and it caused smiling of soldiers whom she asked for her beloved. She couldn’t get the right news from them. At last she believed that she was deceived and thought about suicide. But she couldn’t do it only because of the baby in her uterus.

The time has come and the disturbed young woman gave birth to a baby boy. She called her baby Malik. The baby calmed her a little bit, but it didn’t long. The boy who looked like his father died soon.

She buried her baby and then went out of her mind lived with her pains like a shade. Then Teddi comforted herself and thought something and began to get ready for road. Savva begged her.

"It's too bad you're leaving, sister! Most probably he got married!".

"I will tell him a word and then come back!" Teddi tried to assure her brother and then told him the real reason."Don't stop me, brother, if I stay here I will be mad!"

Savva said again:

"They say, Baku is a big city, how you will find him?"

"I shall find him" she said with uncertain, "Malikajdar told me that there were 32 villages in Baku, the biggest one is ours. He told that his father was Mir Gadir Aga, everybody knows his pilgrimage place. I shall find him."

"Maybe he lied and told you a story? What will you do then?" Savva asked.

"I know his name and surname!" Teddi got nervous."I will find him even in the grave!"

Teddi left for Baku for days and when she realised that she was not deceived she calmed. Though Shakil Qochu surprised Malikajdar's cousine and wife greeted her warmly. She even kissed Teddi who became a second wife of Aga, then she said to Teddi:

“You’re my sister from now on.”

In a month the cousin gave birth to a babyson for Malikajdar Aga. But the baby didn’t bring joy. Her mother was sick, doctors couldn’t help her and she passed away.

Teddi cried for her like a mother, like a sister. She brought up her children and took care of them like a real mother.

-XXIII-

Seyfal welcomed Khalis. He lived among one of the small houses around Aga’s proper house. All the houses looked at each other, there was no fence between them, but the entrance of each one was separate.

Khalis aga was surprised of Seyfal’s changes and took a seat suggested to him. He said:

“I didn’t expect that you would welcome me like that, my cousin!”

Seyfal must have been enforcing Malikajdar Aga’s last commands. And, he didn’t pay attention to the capriciousness of the family members of Aga. Seyfal was assigned the task of taking care of the small Khalis, but he never protect the small brother who was beaten by the elder one. He wanted to see the child like a real

Azerbaijani. What Tidora khanum taught to Khalis at home Sarraf made him to forget in the yard. On each occasion Aga told him:

"Get rid of Christian babbles. The world has been poisoned by them...If the world should've listened to Islam, it was there to keep the world out of trouble."

Khalis's hair that was blonde like ears early childhood became deep lately. He resembled his father, was a smart, discreet and reserved like his father Malikajdar. Seyfal answered with respect:

"It's strange, but I seem to have changed my mind about you, yes, your elder brothers became good-for-nothing and loafers..."

Khalis aga smiled.

"And you're sorry?"

"Sure! Your elder brother was bor for this work! He is mild, well-mannered, pleasant and has a mellow sound. But too bad, he is stubborn like a donkey.

And he used to play cards often, then had a rattling time, and now he has joined the politics."

"What about the other one?"

Seyfal shook his hand.

"Well, no use speaking of him! He's got the mental and emotional capacity of a child. He is really not good for the work.

Khalis laughed suddenly.

"I am sympathetic to your little ordeal, my cousin! I know you had to choose me. If I knew it before I would stay in Krasnoyarsk and wouldn't come here..."

Seyfal said sincerely:

"But I was very glad for your arrival.

As if he'd got free. It is the worst time, things could be much worse. The family must not remain without head."

"Is there any sign of trouble?"

Seyfal calmed him.

"No, don't worry, it is ok. But you know, you can't be too careful these days. Of course, Sani arrested and it makes us to be calm a little bit."

"Is he so dangerous?"

"He was stuck in the cell all those years and wanted to blow everyone up. This type of character rarely defines a loyal man."

"Does he have a lot of powers?"

"He is strong, but I don't think he is stronger than Malikajdar Aga."

"I didn't know. It seemed to me that Aga could only pray"

Seyfal said:

"You have just to know about it. It is Malikajdar Aga's command. Our talks will be taking long."

Sani was shock of the appeal news of his friends. He was pacing the cell and strolling up and down the small cell for an hour. According to the rule the controller put out the light at twelve o'clock. Two of the prisons dropped a hint to each other. Asta Ravil whispered:

"Sani is strolling up and down for hundred times'

Takhta Ravil liked to be correctly:

""You are wrong, this is his ninety fifth round"

Asta Ravil asked:

"So, what happened to him? What, has he lost his mind?"

"We have to be thought over it tonight" Asta said.

"Yes, you are right, we have less time"

"Sani will stay in the cell alone tomorrow" Asta was deeply moved, "Poor man, he will miss without us!"

Takhta Ravil smiled ironically. He was not sentimental like his namesake.

Sani was a thief in law and he was waiting for three years and wad fed fully by Government bread. He was an experienced criminal. Usually he left the prisoner very soon, each time he was freed for a good behaviour not depending on the time of punishment. But it seemed

it's not happening this time and he lost his patience. No one was interested in him.

He wasn't alone in the closed cell for these three years. He was cared for as soon as he was arrested. The invisible forces did everything they could.

His two helpmates were moved to his cell as he wished. He met them twenty years ago in Siberia, when he was exiled to there. Since that time they didn't part from each other. Both of the helpmates called Ravil, the same name. They were tatars. The namesakes were jokers and they liked to wag a. be joyful. They don't let Sani to miss. The Ravils were also famous criminals and were considered to be thieves in law. But they still were errand boys for him.

At last Sani went to sit on the bed his legs folded. He said:

"I am glad that you are freed, my congratulations to you!"

The Ravils smiled. Takhta Ravil embraced him and said:

"Thanks!" And he wanted to kiss Sani but Sani didn't permit him.

"Don't be mischievous!" Sani said. "I will mash you!"

Takhta Ravil moved away immediately. And he knew that Sani could do it if he wanted. He could sting like a snake.

"We thought the news made you sad!" Asta Ravil smiled softly.

"Why? It is a pleasant sign!"

"What is peasant here? You are in prison but we are free!"

"Anyhow, it is good that we are not forgotten!" Sani tried to explain the meaning of the word to them.

Takhta asked:

"All right. "Have you any errands for us to run?"

"I got some advice for you. First, don't ingratiate yourself with somebody. Live your life quietly until I get freed."

"Why?" the Ravils asked together.

"To work independently is not your job!"

"But why?" Takhta asked again.

"You will get into trouble at once! I know you very well!"

"Don't take us for fools. If you let us move on you will see how we are clever!"

"Don't worry, and I hope that the next chance will be the right one for you!" Sani smiled distressing.

Takhta Ravil didn't understand.

"When?"

"After we kill all our enemies!"

Asta Ravil grieved.

"God forbid! Without you we are nobody!"

Takhta said:

“What is the reason for your hopelessness?”

Sani explained:

“The situation outside has been changed radically! You see, there is nobody to remember us for years. Soviet Government is going to be collapsed. There is Armenian-muslims fight there. In fact, we are absolutely forgotton. And that is why we must be very careful not to be in prison again!”

Takhta Ravil scowled.

“If we do like you that we will be hungry!”

Asta Ravil said:

“It makes no difference that you are hungry or not, you are the same wooden face! Keep diet a little bit!”

Takhta Ravil who looked like a jerked meat stared at his fat namesake with hate.

“You need to keep diet a little! You look like a fat pig!”

Sani was angry.

“Shut up! Are not you tired?” and began to explain again:

“No one makes you to be hungry! There is a big cash-box you know!”

Both the Ravils picked up their ears.

“You mean, we can use the kitty?” Asta Ravil asked. “Isn’t too early?”

Sani shook his head.

“It is just time for that! Whom we gather money for? Gulu khanum would never let you be hungry! And you

will have money for current expenses too. The cash-box is controlled by my grandmother and Gulu”

Sani didn’t keep the place of cash-box from the Ravils. He believed them. According to the namesakes there could be much money in the cash-box. But when they heard that the cash-box controlled by Gulu they got displeased.

“It is wrong that you gave the cash-box to be kept to Kursum’s daughter.” Takhta Ravil mumbled.

“Why? When she brought for us a basket of food each week you kept silence...”

“But she was not the only person who brought for us food! Our faithful friend Jinni Janni also brought for us food! And Sallaq Mamish, and Yanig. Even Suka Piri brought for us food!”

“The place of cash-box was not said to all of them!”

Takhta continued:

“Kursum and her son would betray us if they got the chance. They are dishonourable. They will go to any extreme to get money or what they want.”

“You are crazy! Our money in the cash-box is less than Kursum’s own one! She is not a loose woman as before, now she is a millionaire” Sani added. “And I gave cash-box to control not to Kursum, but to her son and Gulu’

“Gulu will never change her mother and brother to you! She’s as nasty as her mother!” Asta Ravil said bitterly. “She is like her...”

"Hey, don't tell any word. She is my wife...with marriage-contract..."

"A thief in law can't have a wife and a family!" Asta Ravil reminded the known rule.

"Cut it out!" Sani got nervous.

Asta Ravil continued:

"You keep a wife in every city and tell our secret to them, yes?"

"Not to all, but she should be saying those things! I checked her for many times! She is all right and poor girl never ties to come to prison to visit me! Each time when I get freed she reports me, they can't betray me!"

"Why?"

"They are afraid of me! And my grandmother Anush is too old, she could die one day and the cash-box would be uncontrolled! But Gulu is taking care of my grandmother for years. And she knew about cash-box long ago'

The namesakes accepted the situation at last. Asta Ravil remembered the armenian old woman and asked with interest:

"Well, why on earth they don't trouble your grandma? They say, Armenians are banished from the city?"

"My grandmother is not an ordinary woman. They can't touch her except God! She has many relations even at high ranks officials".

"However it is good that we are freed" Asta Ravil said.

Sani shook his head.

"In fact, Gulu doesn't let the old woman to be alone. She takes care of her almost every day. Bur I am calmed down a littlr bit that you are freed."

"All right, what we're going to be doing outside?" Takhta asked. "Should we guard your grandma?"

Sani didn't pay attention to his mockery.

"Bur you must guard the cash-box. But don't go to my grandma's house as soon as you are freed. Go to the village, find Gulu, if she needs it she will take you to my grandma. Blow out candles, let us go to bed, it'll be morning soon..."

-XXV -

Gulu was more afraid of meeting the Ravils than of Sani. When she saw them she was shaking, her hair was bristling up with anger. She wanted to settle them as Sani instructed, in one of her brother's houses lacated on the seashore.

"Well, in the meantime, live here, the city is bustling. It's too dangerous to remain in the city. It's crowd that has no control. And could attack the Armenian houses for no reason. Then you too may fail.

The Ravils didn't agree.

"We are just here to protect the old woman!" Takhta Ravil said.

"That's all Sani wanted" Asta Ravil added.

She had to agree.

The Maidan was bubbling with excitement day and night. And the old woman Anush became panic-stricken but when she met her grandson's helpmates her heart filled with joy.

Gulu couldn't get a word, she said:

"They stay as long as they like"

Most of Armenian people had run off by then, but the rest one was still in the town and they were afraid of going out of the houses. Anush relied upon the support of her grandson's beloved Gulu. But when she was alone in the large and high apartment the old woman was afraid.

The mood of the apartment was changed as soon as the Ravils came and began to live in. They behaved like children and was not tired of talking and exchanged bandy words with each other.

They couldn't be full and a big fridge was emptied immediately as soon as filled. They were eating like a wolf.

Anush was wrenched out of shape but she had a keen eyesight like a hawk.

"Hey, you, gluttonous, stop eating! How much longer you can eat!"

Takhta Ravil smiled.

"Maw maw, if you were in prison for three years, you wouldn't be able to say that."

The supper was finished. Gulu wanted to take away the rest of the food. It was twelve o'clock on the wall-clock. The iron door of the apartment knocked pretty hard. Anush granny nestled down the corner. She cried:

"Don't open! Last night they knocked and knocked and went away..."

But they were banging on the door pretty hard and were not tired. It seemed they wanted to break the door. The Ravils stood up and Gullu advised them to take the hatchet in the kitchen.

Takhta Ravil smiled:

"This is my gun!" saying showed his fist and opened half the door.

There were two men stood in threshold. There was a ling in the hand of one of them, and the other had in iron. Takhta asked:

"Why you won't let us rest, guy?"

A man who took in his hand an iron ling said:

"You don't look like an Armenian!"

"Sure, I am tatar!"

The other man said to his mate:

"But you said that this is an Armenian apartment?"

"I don't know exactly! But I am sure that an Armenian old woman lives here!"

A man with ling raised up his "gun" and faced to a little Takhta Ravil:

"Hey, you, tatar, give us the old Armenian woman, and we shal go out and will not touch you!"

Asta Ravil moved up to the threshold. The two men stepped back. Asta Ravil said with a dangerous voice:

"The armenian old woman died already, some days ago, now we are living here. And go away, or you will be troubled" and he shut the door to their faces.

There was great noise that the marauders made outside and later they left the building. There was a deep silence in apartment.

Anush grannie was trembling, she said:

"If you weren't here, I'd be killed."

Takhta Ravil was stil eating but this time unwillingly.

"Maw maw, are you feared of death too?" he said.
"But you've already lived your life".

"I want me to kill Armenians not Azerbaijanis."
Anush whispered.

"What is the difference for you?"

"Difference is great! I want my blood would on their shoulders, so that they will be in sin..."

"So you like azerbaijanis?"

"Yes, all I saw was the kindness of them!" Anush muttered. "Let God damn the Armenians! All murders that happened here were their work! These are their bad deals because of that I couldn't live in peace!"

Gulu turned to men:

"If you want to get asleep I can make your bed"

Takhta Ravil said:

"No, we must not! They can come again!"

Asta Ravil said to old woman:

"Grannie, well, we'll be up all night and you please tell us a good story to stay awake".

- XXVI-

She's been through not a lot of bright moments in her life. Now her past life in Osmanli seemed to Anush like a dream.

Every day, she waited for him in the hill that parted two villages grazing th goats. Mehmet who was gazing the sheep in the Turkish village moved away the pasture and hurried up to the hill. They met in the hill taking hand by hand, palying, singing and enjoying each other and didn't know how flied time. Years passed. One day Anush said to Mehmet:

"Grow up fast, if you be late they will make me the another guy's bride."

“I will try to grow up” Mehmet said timidly.

They were the same age. Anush was fifteen, she was big. Mehmet was small, when they were standing nearby his size spruce got her piles. She was not so beautiful, but she was attractive and pretty.

Anush didn’t pay attention to the events that took place around. She loved him. When she was little her parents died because of thunder. She became orphan and began to live under the care of her uncle’s wife. She used to work hard from morning til night for a piece of bread.

Two armed men appeared in the village. They said that they had come from Caucasian mountains. They didn’t speak like the local Armenians. They wore civilian clothes. But both seemed to be military men because of their acts.

They walked with a gun with two barrels made in Austria and gathered the youth for instructions, taught them to shoot. In the evenings they went to church and spoke about hard life of Armenians, blamed that they became homeless. They talked rubbish about Turkish people.

They were the members of the “Qinjaq” Armenian Party and everybody in the village was afraid of them.

“When the war starts, you need to move to Russia” said two men from Caucasian. Nobody agreed with them

but they kept silence. One day those two armed men got in the way of Anush who returned from pasture. They took her by force to haystack and raped her. As soon as her uncle's wife knew about his shame she ran to the head of village. The head of the village was also afraid of those armed men. First, he didn't believe in the incident, then he went to priest. So, they thought over the matter and decided not to divulge the secret and invited the two men to the church. The armed men gave to them good gifts and decided to suggest to Anush uncle's wife money. If she wouldn't agree they would solve this matter by another method. And they promised to marry Anush too and said that they would take care of all expenses of her wedding party.

There was a hammersmith in the village and his wife died recently. The head of the village and priest advised him to marry Anush who had a good dowry. And Artush agreed to get married to Anush. So Anush got married as soon as possible. Anush went everyday to the hill but timidly looked at the Turkish village where lived Mehmet.

Soon two armed men disappeared from the village.

A year passed. New activists of the “Qinjaq” party appeared in the village.

They were many. They menaced the people who protested them with gun. They demanded people to leave houses and move to Russia. They promised the people money and land. To crush the people’s resistance they shot some cattles in tha pasture of the village. And then set a rumour that this is the job of Turkish people.

Artush was the first who wanted to move. He packed everything in his house and put in the cart.

The armed Armenians set fire to emptied houses.

Head of company of removing migrants called the leader of community. He was a guide too. He was an old Armenian merchant. He helped those who obeyed him without a word. Anush often turned to him for help and he didn’t refuse her. He tried to fulfil her wishes as much as possible. Anush also fulfilled his manhood dezires and slept with him.

In Iranian city Anzali the leader of community encountered difficulties. The ship which had to take Armenians to Baku had not yet arrived. His people who obeyed him until yesterday in silence, now didn’t want to fulfil his orders. They were tired, ill, hungry and it was very difficult to calm and comfort them. The community leader said to them patiently:

“Baku was given to Armeninas by the Russian Tsar! It will be capital of Haystan in future! The half of oil in the world is in Baku, it is a rich city! You will be given apartment, money, food as soon as you arrive in Baku. You will live there better than in Osmanli. Be patient, at last we shall have homeland! Fulfil your duty before the Armenian people! We need to derive benefit from the chance that given to us by Russian emperor!”

At last the expected ship arrived and dropped anchor. The community leader placed the people in the ship, capitain was an Armenian. When the leader left the ship he saw his beloved Anush, and couldn't master his passions. He found a pretext for taking her to karvansaray to his cabinet. He loved Anush and when they were parted he said:

“Why not stay over with me here? Don't fear of your future. I have much money...”

Anush smiled at him.

“If you die on half-way what shal I do?” she said with mockery. You are just old one and wait for your death, but you are speaking on future”

So, when they arrived in Baku thay all placed in the city. It was true, they were waited for in Baku. Artush family placed in a good apartment only because of his wife. The family was given to Qochu Janpolad, under his patronage.

In the late seventeenth year Artush also armed himself and joined the self-defence Armenian groups formed by Arakelov. Nobody knew where the members of the group come from, but the group grew day after day with Armenians. But the military exercises carried out by the group in Biladjari, in scope and in nature, were giving rise to increasingly grave concerns.

When he arrived home later night and smelled of cordite Anush rebuked her husband and said:

“You, crazy guy, they will kill you! Why you joined these cut-throats!”

Artush answered:

“My advice to you is to keep your head down. You don’t understand how men work.”

Artush joined the cut-throat group of dashnaks¹ who was sent by Soviets to Azerbaijani regions not obeyed the new government. The group of dashnaks took part in execution of Turkish-azerbaijani peaceful people. Artush also killed the people of regions – women, children, old men, so whom he met he killed without any mercy.

¹ Dashnak (Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) also known as Dashnaktutyun. It is an Armenian nationalist, terrorist and socialist political party founded in 1890 in Tiflis, Russian Empire (now Tbilisi, Georgia) by Christapor Mikaelian, Stepan Zorian and Simon Zavarian. Today the party operates in Armenia and in countries where the Armenian diaspora is present. Since 100 years they killed hundreds of Turkish diplomats all over the world.

As her husband was always away on duty, and then she'd be alone and she used to be at her neighbour's to spend time. The small son of the neighbor joined the Bolsheviks and worked in Baku Soviet that governed the city. He was joker a little bit and once Anush made a complaint and said to him:

"Tiqranjan, now I'm bored. Theatres and cinemas are closed, I don't know how to spend the time. But I'm afraid to go outside. There many armed persons everywhere, there and here, you don't know what to do...you can get shot at any time... I'd be armed too if I wasn't shy..."

Tiqran joked and said to Anush:

"Aunt Anush, let me take you to Baku Soviet. You must be there. You will be commander over women."

Anush agreed with great pleasure. Next day she joined Tiqran. There were many hot-tempered, pighead, robust and different criminal people in Baku Soviet and most of them spoke in Russian and Armenian. Some people spoke in the Azerbaijani language. But they were less.

Anush joined the Bolshevik party on the recommendation of Tiqran after a few days. She worked at the office which would give advice on strategies and projects relating to women's issues. And she was given a gun of Naqan¹ just in case. Tiqran sometimes joked:

¹ Handmade pistol

"Aunt Anush, you get yourself into trouble!"

"Why, Tiqranjan?"

"If we can't keep power, we're dead! All us will be shot!"

She said with irony:

"Think of yourself, Tiqranjan!" and she hinted about her pretty body. "I can survive somehow!"

When she got there there were a lot of men and she used the chance as much as she wished. She began to admire men and make love at full volume. The women in Baku Soviet started the rumour. The gossip migrated across the office in a matter of days and Tiqran heard about it and called Anush to his cabinet.

"Aunt Anush, just behave yourself, be responsible. Don't spoil my name. And don't frighten away women. I don't want you to be called street-walker!"

She got angry and said:

"Don't lecture me on being prudent! You are not my father-in-law."

One day Anush met Nazioghlu Gulu among the armed people. She knew that he joined the Bolsheviks but they had not met for a long time.

Nazioghlu shared with her his impressions and works, complained his job and asked about Mara. Anush whispered and dropped a hint at him:

“She is at home”

“Is she staying with you?”

“And where is she supposed to live? After Arakelov’s death she returned back to me, she was afraid of living alone” Anush answered half-hearted.

Gulu asked:

“How’s she doing?”

“Oh, she’s in fine fettle.” Anush got angry. “What, you don’t have another topic? Remember, Gulu, Mara has a bad luck, with whom she makes a love he dies soon!”

Nazioghlu Gulu smiled.

“I am not going to die soon!”

His cheerful answer calmed Anush. She hadn’t seen him for a long time, his young body and appearance attracted her and she just took his hand and pulled him to a room. When she entered the room she said:

“Just a minute, wait for me I’ll be back soon”

When she came back she said to him:

“Come on, you are waited for”

Nazioghlu entered the room and greeted the thin, young Armenian behind a big desk.

Anush introduced them to each other.

“Tigranjan, he is our family friend. You told me you need faithful person among the local people. You may trust in Nazioghlu Gulu!”

After a few days Nazioghlu Gulu was appointed to the Extraordinary Commission of the Baku Soviet. After

that they often met each other. Anush wanted to take him to her apartment in Keshla several times. But soon she understood that Nazioghlu was not the man who she wished. He ran away from women and didn't forget Mara. He always spoke about Mara and that was all.

When Turkish army appeared the Baku Commune called back armeninan troops who fully demolished Azerbaijani regions. The Baku Commissars didn't want to leave Baku without war.

Artush came home to change his clothes and saw armed Nazioghlu Gulu in the veranda. Gulu sitting behind the table and was drinking tea. Anush and Mara were near him. Artush was afraid of him and lost his head. He killed thousands of Turkish people and that is why he was shaking with fear. It seemed to him that the young Qochu came to deal with the killer.

But Nazioghlu Gulu interested in only Mara nobody else. He didn't wish Janpolad's death, simply he wanted to get Mara from him. Arakelov took an opportunity. The process was not under the control of Gulu, he was just ill-informed and lost his self-control. After breach of trust he escaped for some times. And when he heard that his step-father was dead he appeared. He joined the Red Army formed by Baku Soviet.

Nazioghlu Gulu approached Arush and embaraced him. He welcomed him and then told him the reason og his coming. Artush got surprised for his mean action

though he was himself a low man. And he was very pleased to meet him, he said:

“You want to get married to my daughter?”

Nazioghlu Gulu shook his head.

“I love her”

“After all that happened you really want to marry her?”

“Yes, I love Mara” he repeated.

“Hey, you, crazy boy, look around, there is a real battle between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. What kind of love is that?”

“I loved Mara before the conflict and war!” Gulu smiled.

Anush wanted to stand by her husband, said:

“As soon as the situation is normalized we will see...”

Mara walked out on their discussion and stood and came up to Gulu, took his hand and said:

“I am ready to be your wife!”

Artush no longer argued and agreed.

Osmanli Army was approaching Baku city gradually, that is why they decided to shorten the engagement. They arranged a slight wedding and Gulu realized his dream.

The Armenian groups which terrified the people living in Baku and its around got the news of Osmanli troops and began to run away. When the first cannon-

ball blew up in Pokhludere Anush was saying farewell to Artush in the seaport.

The Armenian groups were taking the ships. They loaded their military supplies and munitions into the ships.

There were too many looties and plunders and captured materials. Luggage was big and they had to put cargo on board ship for hours.

Artush begged Anush:

“Come on, let us go together! I will die without you!”

“Well, you say, I will live again half – starved? No! When we moved away from Osmanli that was terrible for me. It is enough, I don’t want to live bitter life any more!”

“Don’t be afraid, I am not the one who was poor, now I have much gold, carpets and loots”

“Where did you get all these? Did you foray the people here?” she got surprised.

Artush was sorry to open his secrets and muttered:

“It makes no difference for you, where I got these loots...The main thing is that I have got wealth! Let us go!”

Anush shook her head. At the same time begged Artush not to go away.

“Maybe you stay here? Nobodu will search for you? Your son-in-law is Turkish, he will protect you.”

“You really don’t know what I did. No, it is impossible, even I want I can’t stay here...If I stay here Turkish will surely cut my ears...”

“What make you to join these cut-throat Armenians? Why did you kill the peaceful muslim people? They never did us any harm! It would have been a terribly difficult time, but you would probably have kept your head down!”

Artush seemed to be milksop, Anush asked:

“Shall I see you again?”

“I don’t know”

“If you get a chance come back”

“It is difficult...”

Anush looked at her husband carelessly and he took the ship and soon was lost among the armed, bearded and bleed men like himself. She returned home and was not sorry to lose forever her husband in her life.

- XXVIII-

Though Nazioghlu and Mara lived together like a husband and wife, they fought a lot, and often scold each other. Almost every day they desecrated each other. They probably enjoyed this kind of life. When Turkish troops came to Baku Gulu decided to take his wife to Hashtarkhan. Anush said carelessly:

"Don't you see her mood?"

"What shall I do then? Who will take care of her? I can't stay here, they will punish me because of my serving to Bolsheviks! They can shoot me!"

Anush suggested:

"Maybe you take her to your mother Nazi? To the village..."

"No, I can't, she doesn't like me and it seems to her that I am the guilty of Janpolad's death!

"What about neighbors? I have a little gold, we shall give them a little bit, and they will take care of her until we return." Anush said. "We can take her with us, but I am afraid she will die on the way"

Nazioghlu Gulu protested:

"She is strong! It would be fine!"

They stayed in Hashtarkhan for two years. Gulu took care of his sick wife, paid much attention to her.

It was 1920. When they came to Baku together with XI Red Army Mara was pregnant. In the time of troubles, the baby was born and they named him Badi. It was difficult for Mara during the state she recently confined. She lost interest for life and fled in the sky. She shrank like a dried apple. The baby didn't bring the happiness. The child didn't look like his father and gradually one could see that by looking into his appearance. Gulu couldn't believe Mara's weak oath. Badi looked like

Arakelov. His big nose reminded Armenian. Nazioghlu said wrathfully:

“You delivered heir not for me!”

“My God, I am not guilty!” she cried.

Anush stood by her daughter:

“Look, Arakelov died long ago! You are still jealous of him?”

Everything was normal. But the baby was just like Arakelov, that was not fully understood!

No one loved Badi. Mara looked at her child as demon who was born unwillingly. When the baby cried she wanted to strangle him. Grannie Anush took care of him. The sweetest words for the baby were as follows:

“Turkish donkey” or “Armenian remainder”.

Nazioghlu Gulu located in a good apartment faced to sea in accordance of his position. It was one of the apartments of the former millionaires. Anush tried sincerely her son-in-law to be promoted. All soviet offices belonged to Armenians.

Anush moved to Gulu’s large apartment without any permission. She worked in the City Committee of the Communist Party and dealing with the issues of women. She was known as an honest Bolshevik. One day she said Gulu:

“We need to sweep that village clean of munchers once and for all.”

“You mean our village?”

"Yes!"

"Why on Earth? What do you want from our village?"

"You think all Janpolad's people were killed? And there is no one alive?"

"Let's suppose there're some of them living now? What is the guilt of them?"

"You, crazy guy, they are witnesses, understand? Witnesses! If you don't take away the past witnesses one day they will make for you problems"

"They are all illiterate? They can't even write. Who will listen to them?"

"There are educated people in the village too... For instance, Mir Gadir Aga... "

"No need to be afraid of him!"

"He is just the most dangerous one... You don't know"

"Ok. I will think about!"

Anush once again came in the bedroom of her son-in-law. After baby Mara was very ill. She lost her head, she was absent-minded and slept separately. The doctor came in almost every day, gave her the medicine, and gave her a shot for the pain.

Anush was in a good mood all day. Usually men like this type of women. Nazioghlu Gulu looked ironically at his mother-in-law who approached to his bed, she had on the nightgown. He said:

"You're up to your old tricks, mother-in-law!"

Anush said:

"I knew that we're allies."

"We are allies everywhere but not in bed!" Gulu smiled.

"Well, what should I do then? I am young, so young... Beauty fades..."

"Then marry one of the men and be done with it. I don't need anybody but Mara!" he warned her severely and ordered to leave the room.

Anush had to go back but that was not so badly for her. But when she didn't come home Nazioghlu Gulu knew that she had guests. The apartment that given to Artush family by Janpolad was the place of wild life for Anush. There were noisy rakish company in the house sometimes. When Gulu heard about it from others he rebuked his mother-in-law for her behavior.

"Behave yourself! Never talk to people with no scruples!"

"And whom should I talk?"

"Be friend with men of the faith!"

Anush answered happily:

"They don't have the manhood! They have spent it for the revolution! But I promise that from today I will make a love with faithful men!"

Gulu muttered:

"Don't flirt with men! Their wives can complaint about you to the Committee of the Communist Party"

Anush laughed.

“You are not a son-in-law! You are just good-for-nothing! You’ll make a good prayer and mullah and terrible spouse.”

Gulu insisted.

“You, women, come to your sense! Gather your wits! I can get you out of my house!”

After this threat Anush braced herself up a little bit, but she didn’t stop to flirt men.

Nazioghlu Gulu was not interested in his mother-in-law’s affairs. He had enough trouble himself. Sometimes he came up to the cradle, looked at the sleeping child and tried to find his features on his face. But when he couldn’t find the lines close to him he became very sad.

Nazioghlu Gulu worked at the Extraordinary Commission and he liked it very much. It was a profitable job. He almost spent much time at office and went to house late night. One who was against the Soviet Government considered to be enemy and he did his best to ruin him and his family. And there were too many people who had to be arrested, killed by him.

He checked many times his village where he brought up. He forgave and forgot no one, and even who was to him unkind in his childhood, who hurt him and his mother and who made him to work like animal in his yard... In fact, he settled old scores with everybody whom he disliked. But after he suffered and it gave him pangs of hell.

But though he had have power to do everything he never looked at the strange women except Mara. He loved Mara who was so weak and thin. At nights he sometimes turned her insensible body to the right and left.

His sick wife gave birth to her second child, a boy whom they named "Sani", in 1933.

It's been months already. And then tragedy started. He almost killed six-month-old baby.

"Don't be mad!" Anush took away from his hand the kid." I don't know what he's guilty of?"

"You stood me up!" Gulu bellowed with anger.

The baby looked like Janpolad who was killed long ago. The baby was like an apple cut in two halves.

Mara who was long dead emotionally, but this similarity revived her and she felt well sometimes. She even made her mother angry.

"You thought you could take Janpolad from me?"

Nazioghlu Gulu was arrested in 1937. He was taken into the black car and put in prison.

Anush didn't have a baby. She changed several men and at last realized that the problem was, in fact, with herself. She calmed a little bit. Though she didn't like Mara, she keened to her children. But she was afraid of taking care of the children after Nazioghlu Gulu arrested.

She had let things slide.

Badi was sent to Siberia.

Mara was mad and was taken to the mad-house. But Anush didn't do anything, kept silence. Sani was given to orphanage.

After the war, people just didn't feel like being scared. During this period, she was called from the mad-house and informed about the death of her daughter Mara.

The Armeninan honour revived in her heart and she didn't agree that her step daughter was buried in the cemetery for unknown people. Anush took the dead body of her step daughter and buried it in the Christian cemetery of Armanikand.¹ She spent a little money to renovate the grave and put the tombstone on her grave.

Anush once a year used to visit to orphanage and met Sani for a moment. She sometimes took to him food and sweets and he was very glad to see his grandmummy. But there was no news of Badi. No one knew where he was.

¹ Armanikand is a compact settlement in Baku where lived Armenians

Sani felt in the orphanage very, very special. He's picking all off like fish in a barrel. Over the years, he became accustomed to the strict rules of the communal life.

Sani was notable for his height and strength. If he was not fed he grabbed the shares of his mates. If some one protested, he did hurt him. In fact, he was merciless and cruel among his mates.

Years passed by fast. Sani grew up and was a big guy. He often helped the head educator. The elder groups became calm only because of his force. Sani did beat them and punched them not paying attention to anyone. He was so cruel that the head educator sometimes was sorry to ask him for helping. She begged him:

"Sani, don't cripple the children!

Sometimes he was not needed, the children became calm when his name pronounced by head-master.

The head educator delivered Sani a separate room. He was fed fully. The head master often didn't pay attention to his desires.

Without Sani the head educator couldn't manage the groups. Even sometimes the portions of orphans were stolen and taken out of orphanage to the market with the help of Sani. The head educator said to him:

“That should remain between us, no one must know about our deals! Don’t tell anybody!”

Sani’s gradually gone completely out of control. His demands increased and didn’t listen to the head educator. He was leaving the orphanage any time he wanted, came back as late as he wished. Sometimes he took to the orphanage a woman. And once the head educator saw how he was making sweet bliss in his room. He suddenly entered the room and cried at Sani:

“Hey, scoundrel! What are you doing? Rascal!”

Sani looked at him with anger, said sharply:

“Shut it! If I tell half what I know about you to the head master you will be finished and trown out of school!”

The head educator had to accept this insult.

Sani was not alone. He formed a small group for himself and kept around himself some of the mates who were strong and brisk.

They came over to the bazaar near the railway station a lot. One of them

Attracted seller away from them and the other pinched something. Before they lived somehow but then they made a deal with the head of railway station and shared with him what they plundered from sellers.

It didn’t last long. One day they got into trouble and milis took them to the milis office. The local precinct who interrogated Sani said ironically:

"But tell me - who do you work for? Who is your benefactor?"

Sani didn't betray the head of railway station.

"I did it alone!" he said.

The local precinct looked at him attentively. He said:

"You think I will believe you? Crazy boy, the head of railway station was sacked and he is now in the city milis department, and is questioned. No sense to protect him!

Sani braced himself up, said to him insistently:

"I was doing it alone. Uncle Mamish didn't know about it!"

The local precinct liked the young guy's decisive action, but he didn't change his mind.

"Uncle Mamish is a rattle-brained person. He is a stingy man who tempted to even cent. A little greed may cause much harm. But I know that he grasbed all money that you gathered. Am I right?

Sani knew that it was no use to keep the word from milis, in any case he knew everything. The boy said:

"Yes, that is right! I told him to giv us a little money, but he wouldn't...He threatred us and feared of milis."

The local precinct continued:

"No need to make money that way..."

Sani smiled ironically, said:

"But how? Maybe you teach me?"

The milis man said in the same way:

"You can live safe and sound if you know how to use your tongue. If you loosen your tongue I will teach you how to make money! My name is Aram!"

Sani shook his head with obedience.

"Chief, I am an obedient boy!"

The milisman said with irony:

"Yes, I see, I see... You think I don't know about your deeds? How toy turned orphanage into whorehouse, and taking to there the women? And you make them to take off the clothes and dance in front of you? Yes. Yes. Isn't it true?"

Sani joked.

"Chief, I am young! Well, you think you never been a young?"

Aram got angry.

"Behave yourself! I would show you how to be young! But in regret, you are Anush's grandchild!"

Sani confused.

"Do you know my grannie?"

Aram cheeked him:

"I know your father too!"

Sani was curious.

"So how do you know my father?"

Milis man said unwillingly:

"He was my chief! He was a valuable man! My one regret is he was Azerbaijani!"

"I am also Azerbaijani, chief!" he answered in anger.

Aram said softly:

"Why do you call me chief? You can call me uncle as your mother was an Armenian woman!" he smiled.

Sani hinted:

"Uncle must lend a helping hand to cousin, chief!"

Aram agreed.

"Sure! And I am here to support you. You grandmother asked me to help you! You will wait for me tomorrow in front of the milis office!"

Sani said carefully:

"Ok! Shall I come alone or with guys?"

Aram thought a little bit, then asked:

"How many children in your group?"

"The most faithful children are two. They are in the same age like me"

"Well, take them too"

"But what about the permission? Will they let me go out of orphanage?"

Aram smiled.

"Don't worry! I talked with the head master!"

"When will we return back?"

"And if everything goes like it's supposed to, then you don't need to come back! You are just eighteen! You have to say good-bye to orphanage and get a job!"

Sani picked up his ears.

"So, what kind of job?"

Aram answered in a perfunctory manner:

"It would depend on the circumstances of the case.'

The bulldozers are pushing piles of soil back and forth. They are dripping the big territory of land for when they get stones. They they are tempered the steel rails on the ground, fit up mining combines for stone-cutter. Thus, in such a way created the stone quarries.

Road building equipment such as bulldozers, excavators, dump trucks, rollers and asphalt pavers were working day and nights and the hired dump trucks filled with stones took them to the big military unit located at the foot of mountain. They were constructing barracks, military warehouses, flying fields and underground shelters against the missiles.

The settlement around the quarries was growing day by day. The strange persons were not permitted to the settlement guarded by armed soldiers.

The armed troops all evaporated of a sudden in 1953. There was only one commandant left. He was a reserve Russian officer, liked wining and dining. Sometimes he drank much and his red face was shining as usual.

In recent days, he had been witnessing the young village people visited to the settlement. His red face turned grey. They young people of the village pinched everything what they met.

The main inhabitants of the settlement were women and girls. They moved to the settlement from Moldova.

The life of exile freed these women from some customs and habits. They built barracks by hand themselves. They all became stronger as they stayed here and carried out hard works. They couldn't be compared to former thieves and cut-throats who were freed from prison, they were all hard-working women.

After hard working they went out of barracks and wanted to look for the entertainments. They were collected before the small club in the settlement.

The dance evenings were organized in the odd days of the week. Many young women's ringing laughter made Absheron nights brilliant. The young guys bought up in the muslim villages having great desire for entertainment thronged to the settlement to taste the forbidden apple.

The commandant had thus far been unable to establish relations with them and couldn't manage the existing situation. The village precinct Aram promised the commandant to help him and would restore order in the settlement.

Last night raised hell in the settlement.

There was a great ballyhoo between local youths and people who recently freed from prison conditionally. They even fisted at commandant who ran to calm the youths. And at the end he had to call soldiers from the military unit.

The local precinct Aram came to the settlement in the morning. Commandant met him displeased.

"Look at me well' he said to him and showed his lower jaw turned blue.

"And when I need you – nowhere!"

Aram shook his head.

"All in vain! You know it wasn't my fault! Don't blame me! My territory is so big that I can't reach everywhere"

The commandant said with angry:

"You sleep in your warm apartment but I am here in scandal!"

Aram already had got the news on the case and smiled ironically:

"You think I must guard the street-walkers until morning?"

The commandant kept silence for a while, then began to beg him:

"Please, help me! Two or three milis men, that will be enough!"

"Give up the milismen! It is impossible! My chief would never agree with that!"

"Well, what shall we do?" the commandant muttered. "They say armeninas are knowing everything! Where is your slyness? Why can't yu find a way for solution?"

Aram laughed.

"Don't worry! You will see now who am I? You don't need to be in a hurry in this case! The scalded dog fears cold water"

“What is that?”

“It is a saying. Local saying! You never know! But if you give a job to the young three guys from the nearest orphanage your problem will be solved!”

“No, they can”t! It is not the orphans job! I need real strong people!”

“They are strong orphans! How many vacancies you have got?”

“Only two vacancies! Head of club and a sweeper! But what will I do with the third one? I don”t know...”

“The third one will be assistant to head of club! Let it be freelance! Well, will it work or not?”

“Well, that’s all right! Where are your orphans?”

Aram laughed ironically.

“They’re here! You see I’ve not come empty-handed!”

“All right, have them come into my office.”

-XXXII-

There was a knock on the door in summer day of 1951. Anush looked through her front door peephole. There was a young boy behind the door. Anush stepped aside with fear. That was Janpolad”s real young image of whom she set-on the death 30 years ago! He was as ugly as poor Janpolad. But soon she opened the door.

“Grannie Anush, do you recognize me?” he embraced his grandmother who was dazzled.

Sani looked older than his age. But when she looked at him very closely the deceptive similarity became diminished.

Though her grandson looked like her beloved his lines of face were very soft, not rude. Quite obvious when you look at it in the proper light you could find the gentle features of his mother Mara.

It was a kind of mystery!

Anush embraced him firmly and cried a little bit. Asked again and again:

“Is that really you, Sani?”

“It is me, grannie Anush! Why you forgot me?” Sani grumbled. “Why didn’t you visit to me to orphanage?”

Anush answered humbly:

“I have been up all days with my body, my child!”

“I will take care of you myself from now on! When I was eighteen I left orphanage, and I found a job too...”

“Where are you going to live?”

“If you don’t mind I will stay wit you”

After war if she wanted that she could take Sani from orphanage, but she got feared, fright of 1937 was not gone away.

Now the similarity of her grandson to Janpolad admired her, she forgot everything, and wished a person in her elderly age, she said:

“Why not? Stay, dear, I have nobody except you”

Lately, she couldn’t forget Janpolad’s head that was cut. However, it was impossible to change everything happened in the past, but she felt a little bit comfort taking Sani to the apartment. It seemed to her that she was taking care of real Janpolad...

Badi just came back to Baku in the same year. Anush was upset over the news. The elder grandson had have a spite against her. He didn’t want to see anybody, he had a strong aversion to everything.

The childhood memories are strong and forever. It seemed to him that the only person who was guilty for all his family’s misfortune was his grandmother. He hated Anush, but he was kind to his brother Sani.

“Where have you been, Badi?” Sani asked.

He couldn’t turn his neck, but he was as strong as a bull. Sani was unfit for military service, at his birth he was flat-heeled foot. And he was freed off military service by the help of his grannie Anush.

The stunted Badi looked at his little brother and started to tell him shortly the whole story that happened to him.

“I was exiled to Kazakhstan. First days it was very difficult, then I soon got used to this kind of hard life. When the war started I went to front voluntarily”

When he was sent to exile Sani was little. He was just eight. Noe when Badi stood near his brother he felt to be worried a little bit. They were different though they were brothers.

In an hour later Badi said:

"I can't stay in this apartment!"

The Government had not confiscated Nazioghlu Gulu's house. The large apartment belonged to Anush now. The old woman begged Badi:

"My child. This house belong to both of you, don't go!"

"No, I can't stay here, this house smells blood. And I will also take Sani with me!"

Sani said at once:

"No, I wil not! I will stay with my grandmother! Whrever you want, you may go!"

She felt her grandson's support and began to weep.

"My wealth, my diamond and golds are yours. I have nobody except you!"

Badi didn't pay attention her tears. He said:

"Who just wants your wealth? People are going to communism! But ypou are speaking about golds!"

Anush shook her head.

"The wealth will be needed every time!"

Badi said ironically:

"Why you, Armenians like money much? You are only speaking on wealth, that is all!"

"You are also half Armenian! Don't forget it!" Anush warned her grandson. "To be wealthy is a good thing!"

"Don't count me in! I was ok with my single a soldier's overcoat for a long years. And I will live somehow without your wealth in future"

Suddenly he was interested in the house.

"By the way, why they didn't confiscate the house after my father?"

"But in order to protect this house I had to open too many doors!"

"You can ask for house, but not for Mara!"

"Why would you say that, my child? If I didn't support her, she would not be sent to the mad house, her husband was the "people enemy. And did they give Sany to the best orphanage. But I couldn't support you, you were sent to exile... I couldn't help... couldn't..."

"Well, where were your Armenians, very resourceful men?"

"They all had been fagging at their own survival! Don't cast reproaches upon somebody! If you knew what happened you wouldn't say that, my child!"

Badi got all the gory details lapse driven by fear.

After her husband's arrest Mara's health became worse and worse. She was expected exile too. The officials firstly thought that she tries to pass herself off as a mad woman in order not to be sent to hell. They

made her to be checked up again and again. After they believed that Mara was mad.

Badi listened to the story relating to his mother, then he calmed.

"What about our house in the village? Is it safe?"

"Yes, it is! If I was not, they would destroy it!"

"Well, I will live there!"

"Ok, go there. But don't forget your mother's grave! Pay a visit to her grave! May her rest in peace!"

Badi said:

"When she was alive she was not welcomed me. Do you think she would be happy in the grave now?"

This moment Sano got very angry.

"What right have you got to say a thing like that?"

"You really don't know Anush, brother! This old woman brought us bad luck!"

"Don't say like that, my child!" Anush cried.

Badi visited to his mother's grave unwillingly by the insistence of his brother. But he didn't stay at the house which brought him bad luck at birth. He went to the village where he never been at least once. He worked at kolkhoz for two or three months. But he was assigned to lead a unit at kolkhoz unexpectedly. It was Anush who supported him secretly. Badi didn't know about it.

Sani lived a safe, comfortable life in the apartment together with Anush. Grandmother seemed to be acted around him like a savior. If anything happened to him, she's right there or she ran to the militia office to help her grandson.

At her request, he was released from the militia office. There were many Armenians in the city militia and they listened to the old woman though they met her with irony. In fact, her requests were heard everywhere as she had been working for a long time in the City Committee of the Communist Party. She knew almost everybody among the high rank officials. She was really living archive. If she was in a difficult situation, she used air quotes every time she said the words, "the law."

If Anush hadn't good relationships, most probably her grandson's condition would be bad, he would be in prison forever. But Sani didn't get lessons, he became more unbridled time by time.

He was not punished for crippling one of the officers, instead - six months sentence, no parole, forced labour!

He was sent from the court directly to the stone quarry in the settlement. The decision was special, because Sani just worked there as the head of club.

Sani was reproving his Grannie who visited to him:
"Where are your skillful Armenians?"

Anush said:

“Why on Earth, are you saying that? They supported you, don’t be ungrateful!”

“Is it a help?”

“Don’t be silly! Be grateful to God, they saved you! Otherwise you would be sent to Siberia...”

-XXXIV-

Gulu asked the Ravils to look for the old woman Anush and returned back to settlement. She knocked on the door of her friend Samaya without thinking. Samaya’s daughter welcomed her. Though they were not in the same age they were close friends. Kursum and Mariya Topal were old friends. It was time they used to go to sweet bliss evenings together. Gulu remembered it well. When Kursum made a fortune she ended the friendship, and she didn’t contact Mariya any more who lost her legs. But girls continued their friendship. Samaya said smiling:

“What took you so long, aunt Gulu? I just missed for you”

Gulu smoothed her rounded belly and asked:

“How is this sly dog?”

Samaya twisted her mouth and curled her lips.

“Don’t talk to me like that! That’s no way to treat a lady! Our marriage-contract with Hatam Aga signed by Akhund¹ himself.

Gulu swallowed her saliva.

“Wel, don’t knit your brows! Is it growing?” She hinted at her pregnancy.

“Yes, it is kicking”

“Boy or girl?”

“It’s a baby boy!”

“How do you know?”

“They say, when belli looks like a round ball, the boy is coming”

“Will he also be Seyyid?”

“Why not? My son will be also one of the relatives of our peopphet, became Aga!”

“I wonder, whom will he look like?”

Samaya said with hot tempered voice:

“He apparently will look like to his father!”

“What if he won’t be like his father?”

“Don’t talk bad about my baby! I still fell into thinking”

“I want to ask you every time, but I’m too shy.”

“Well, if you are really shy, aunt Gulu? I didn’t know about it!” Samaya smiled.

“How did you talk Hatam into it?” Gulu interested.

¹ Akhund, also Akhoond is a Persian title for an Islamic cleric, common in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan. Other names for similar Muslim clerics include sheikh and mullah.

Samaya didn't keep anything from her mother's friend.

"Oh, it was very difficult! Each time when I wanted to take him to the doctor I got in trouble. I don't blame him. It is very difficult to take sperm from him. Several times his sperm was planted but for nothing, the doctor was not satisfied\$ at last it happened. They took extraction and put it into my uterus."

"It is a pity that I am childless!" she said with joke. "If only I asked Hatam for donor, and I would give birth to one more Aga!"

"Well, go and get inseminated from Sani!" Samaya shouted with jealousy.

Gulu laughed light-heartedly.

"Oh, you are just a stingy woman!"

She didn't stay long. After a short conversation she went into the other room, met Mariya Topal who watched the TV sitting on the wheelchair. Mariya was interested in her mother:

"How is my millionaire sister?"

"She is also sick like you!"

"But why she forgot me?"

"Well, you can't have friendship any more!"

"Why? The old woman asked. "Whe we were young we could share with her a man... but now, what we can't share?"

"You're both being punished for your past misconducts!"

"Oh, my dear, there too many women who were busy with bad deeds, if I would count them..." Mariya Topal said with irony.

Gulu frowned.

"Keep your forked tongue behind your teeth, old woman!"

Mariya Topal smiled softly.

"Tell my sister to come and see me!"

"If she recovers she will come..."

She moved away from the wheelchair and went to her friend Samaya, embraced her who followed her to the gate. When they parted Samaya whispered to her:

"Don't you fear of going against Sani?"

"If you have any troubles as I had, you would never ask me..." She got touchy. "You just revived my sorrow"

-XXXV-

Her father was a friend of Sani who inspired fear for the criminal world. He was always at Sani's service like a slave. As head of the family, he was bad. He couldn't control his wife.

Kursum, his wife's gone rusty and everyone including her husband knew that Kursum was sleeping around.

She married on certain condition to her husband, but it couldn't limit much her freedom.

Sani used come to their samal house in the settlement at nights. Gulu was fifteen and Shikil was five. The sexy contacts between Kursum and Sani happened in front of the children.

One day head of the family playing cards, lost his wife and daughter for Sani. Everything was simple after losing. Sani came to their house quite distinctly and seeing the teenage girl Gulu liked her as a woman. He was at her room for days, but her mother Kursum was jealous of her daughter to Sani. She wanted to part with Sani but he didn't want to cut relations with her, so, he lived with both mother and her daughter. No one mastered passions, they all lived with voluptuous feelings. And sometimes Sani, Kursum and her daughter slept in the same bed.

When Sani was in prison he had made a lot of mess and played tricks on everybody. He was also playing with little Shikil, sometimes he petted the boy, sleeked down his hairs, smoothed him in front of his mother and sister. But one day Gulu warned Sani, she menaced this villain:

"If you touch to my brother I will cut your head!"

But at the moment the head of family disappeared and no one interested in him. Thus, the family was managed by Sani completely. They depended on him now and

this dependence had some advantages too. No one in the settlement stuck to the family because of Sani.

Kursum came up with a huge chunk of money when the Soviet Union was collapsing. Everywhere opened shops where people could purchase clothes. She had some money that she made by selling herself. Soon she was assigned to one of the small bazaars near the railway station with the support of her old friend who worked in militia. Soon the bazaar increased and turned into a huge market. She became respected and influential lady in a short time. And rumors spread that she was giving a hundred dollars to one who called her "sister".

Many rich people have a lot of weird encounters in their life. As she was cleaned and washed by lots of money, the former street-walker turned into an innocent lady. Now the respectable men in the city was proposing to her. Of course. She was a clever woman, she did not accept any proposals. What marriage should be in this age! And she was just sick and becoming more weaker as her money increased. Pains did hurt her.

Kursum often got sick, she couldn't even get out of bed. Her business had been managed by her son. Her

son Shikil becoming rich was dreaming of strange things. But all his efforts were in vain. His uncle Shiri Shiriyevev didn't want to be reconciled with them.

One day Kursumoghlu met his uncle in the street and said to him:

"Uncle...."

Shiri Shiriyevev cut his word:

"I have not cousin by your name!"

Kursumoghlu tried to smooth his uncle:

"I have come here by Kursum's request, uncle. Your sister has something to tell you"

"I haven't a sister!" he said and moved away immediately.

She came home from the market, called a doctor, took her medicines and became a little more lucid.

Her son Shikil was sitting by her bed and watching his mother. And he said to his mother grieving.

"What happened to you, Kursum?"

"It is my last few days, my son!" she tried to smile.

"What would I do without you?" Shikil cried.

Kursum was pleased of her son's tears.

"Your tears are a kind of medicine for me, son!" she said and then at once changed the topic.

"Tell me about your uncle! Did you meet him?"

"Your brother is not a man, he repeated the same words "I have not a cousin!", "I have not a sister!", like a parrot.

"Well, if says like that you don't need uncle. Am I right?"

"I don't need him absolutely! I need his relations!"

Kursum tried to understand her son.

"We have enough money!"

"But you know, we have also enough enemies!"

"Well, you can just buy these relations, son!"

"There are things that you never buy, mother."

"Yes, sure! You are developing evidently, my child!"

Kursum praised her son.

Shikil was pleased with his mother's kind words. His mother warned him:

"But you should not overstate the capacity and chances of your uncle!"

Shikil asked with interest:

"Have you got the news?"

Kursum smiled.

"Your uncle's general father-in-law is going to go to Moscow! Soon Shiri will be without support! Don't be in a hurry!"

Shikil informed the news his mother that he got from his sister Gulu.

"Sani's cut-throats are freed from prison. We must get out of his supportance. We must do something against Sani while he is in prison. Later will be too late."

Kursum whispered:

"Be careful! If he suspects us, he will kill us!"

Her son answered decidedly:

"There's no coming back from that, mummy! I can't live in humiliation anymore!"

"You are right, son! Sani must also taste the humiliation! God bless you, my son!"

-XXXVI-

Gulu was cordially bound to her brother. She was to him like a mother. When Kursum was practicing prostitution Gulu was ten years old and her little brother who was born unwillingly was under her cares. Since that time they believed each other. Though she didn't approve his brother's attempt to be reconciled with his uncle she said:

"Why you are in a hurry?"

"I don't understand his stubbornness! He doesn't like us!"

"I just don't understand your stubbornness too. What will you get from that?"

"But I am in need of his assistance. You know that I am going to fight!"

"I don't advise you to fight!"

"Why?"

"That could lead to tragedy"

"If you support me everything will be ok!"

"Will you change your mind?"

"I have decided already!"

"Maybe..."

Gulu kept silence for a moment, then continued:

"This bloody man ruined my childhood and youth. But back then I thought he was my husband. I visited to him to prisons and saw also his thanks."

There were times when Sani was freed, he brought a blond Russian girl to the village. She was prettier than Gulu. Sani took the Russian girl to Kursumoghlu's apartment near the seashore and made Gulu to serve and take care of her. But it didn't last long, Sani was arrested again. And suddenly the Russian girl disappeared in the same way as she arrived.

"Then, what's the concern?" Shikil asked.

"I am afraid of losing you, brother!"

"Don't be afraid! Sani is not the same one as before! Ha has already lost his support! Don't you see, he couldn't be able to be freed off the prison for years?"

"It seems to you, brother! You don't know how he is strong!"

"He was supported by Armenians!"

"Brother, people like Sani can't be without support! Most probably, he is supported by the others! Maybe you go to Malikajdar Aga and he can give an advice. I think he is the one who can help you, you can trust in him."

Hatam couldn't leave his wife for a minute. And she kept her belly flat, the smooth belly pregnancy would never deform. She grown more beautiful. The cheerful innocent angel appeared on her cheeks.

"I am in a hurry" she said and added: "I suppose you have not called me for nothing"

Samaya put on airs, behaving in an affected manner.

"It is very important this time!"

After conversation Hatam said:

"Let Gulu watch those cut-throats! Let her inform me about hteir each step!"

Samaya shed a few tears, said:

"Agaoghlu, take care of yourself! Be careful! Let my baby not come to world like an orphan!"

Hatam said softly:

"Don't shed tears! If only I shouldn't join you to this game!"

Samaya felt kindness of Hatam and again shed tears.

"You're scaring me." She said.

Hatam thought for a while, then said:

"Don't gou out until the baby is born! Don't go even to the yard, to the neighbour and don't contact anybody!"

He repeated the phone number of the pilgrimage several times. " You will call Adam, tell him you wish and he will contact me'

Samaya got surprised.

"Why you hide our relationship from relatives, I don't understand. And I don't understand you to open our secret to your brother too. But he will immediately inform Aga, you know!"

"My brother is a light-minded man, but he is not pratter and long-tongued"

Hatam comforted her and added:

"Contact Gulu by phone!"

"Is it because of Sani's helpmates?"

"Possible! So, I just talked to mamacha¹, she will come and stay with you tomorrow!"

"Is she going to spend the nights with me?"

"Yes, all nights and days! In short, she will stay here until the baby is born! She will cook, go to market and do everything for you."

Samaya took Hatam's hand gratefully and kissed it.

-XXXVIII-

Malikajdar told his beads until his thoughts become limpid. There was deep silence in the stall. Then he shared the news with people around him. Khalis and Mizi didn't speak. The news affected them but it didn't touch Seyfal at all. At last Mizi muttered:

¹ Here means midwifery, a woman who was busy with midwifery. In the past these women worked at home and helped the women to give birth

"That means Sani will also be freed soon. Is it true?"

"Is it true that the Ravils freed off the prison?" Khalis asked suspecting.

Malikajdat shook his head and Khalis asked again:

"Sometimes that type of news is a lie!"

Malikajdar told them source of news.

"Lotu Fakhi never send false news!"

Seyfal hook his head.

"Hatam Aga told the same!"

Mizi got surprised:

"Well, how did the son-in-law know that news?"

Seyfal shrugged his shoulders.

There was a big pause again in the stall.

When Malikajdar remained alone with Seyfal Aga asked him:

"How things are going with Khalis?"

"Not so bad! He's taking the whole thing really easy. You can give him all account-books, he can manage it!"

But Malikajdar didn't agree with him as he knew something about Khalis.

"How to handle him the accountancy if we just can't find him in sanctuary!"

"Yes, that is right" Seyfal confirmed.

"But he doesn't like a desk job! Maybe we let him take the guard post?"

“What about Mizi? What will he do then?” Malikajdar asked.

“My uncle will take care of cooking and cleaning of the sanctuary. It is ok for him. He is old enough.”

“Interesting proposal!” Malikajdar breathed deeply. “But I don’t like Khalis to gather wayward youths around him. I heard he opened a zorkhana¹ in one of the hothouses and regularly hosts competitions. What he wants to do?”

Seyfal smiled.

“Yes, I aske him once, and he smiled and said that he was playing, you know. He has nothing better to do.”

“You just have to figure out what it is. What exactly is it that he wants to do?”

“Ok, Aga!” Seyfal noticed his anxiety on his face and left the stall.

-XXXIX-

Shikil had been thinking about what his sister said. Soon thereafter, he began to act. But nothing blinded his judgment... and made him careless. So, he waited, and waited, and it got dark... then he just got in his car, and drove directly to the place of pilgrimage. He first

¹ Zorkhana – a place where the Azerbaijani strong and young people wrestled for a prize

rounded the pir¹ because of no one would suspect him, put some money into the alms box, then sent a man for Seyfal. He lighted a cig waiting for him, and suddenly he was called, he was Seyfal.

"Let's go, Aga is waiting for you!" Seyfal said. Malikajdar and Khalis were standing, Mizi leaned over the door. They welcomed the guest and all took their seats.

Kursumoghlu refused the food which offered to him, and he said:

"Actually, I came to speak to Äga! It is a conversation just for both of us."

Malikajdar shook his head.

"No any stranger here! I trust them!"

Kursumoghlu had to get right to the point.

"I think you know that the Ravils just got out of prison..."

Malikajdar didn't move, he listened to him patiently, said:

"Yes, I know!"

"Everyone knows that Sani is my friend."

"Yes, me too..."

"Everybody knows that Sani trusts me"

"Yes, I know it also" Malikajdar shook his head.

"He only lets you in his house. He only comes to your

¹Sacred place

restaurant without bodyguard. And there are legends of your friendship”

“But what we have can’t be called friendship.”

“Well, what is this?”

“In fact,...in fact...Sani...”

Malikajdar helped him to finish the sentence:

“In fact, Sani is your step-father.”

“I wouldn’t say that” Kursumoghlu coldly. “In fact, he is one of my mother’s lovers.”

This fact was morally flawed and Malikajdar looked at him surprisingly and said with hesitation:

“But I didn’t say that...”

Kursumoghlu answered ironically:

“It makes no difference, you told or you thought. He had forced my mother to do it.”

“But he’s not guilty of your mom walking around. I spent my childhood in the village. And Kursum had chosen that path herself!”

Kursumoghlu frowned.

“My mother talks about you - mean, all of you, how good you are.”

“Yes, I know...” Malikajdar looked at him carefully. Kursumoghlu like a snake coiled up, he was ready to throw himself on them. But he took out of his pocket a pistol and put it in front of Malikajdar. All people inside turned pale except Malikajdar. He didn’t just move.

Shakil said:

"The militia commander gave me this gun!"

"Well, why he's arming you?" Malikajdar asked carefully.

"I must kill Sani as soon as he gets out of jail."

"And you agreed?"

"I have no other choice...I am depending on militia chief. If I don't agree they will send me to prison for 10 years..."

"What have you done?"

"I'm suspected of murdering a waitress in my restaurant last year"

"But the case was closed as I know"

"It is easy to open the closed case for justice!"

"What are their arguments?"

"As to chief, they found a fingerprint of me on the knife"

Malikajdar didn't understand.

"What knife?"

"The knife that was put in the girl's heart"

"So, you killed the girl?"

"Aga, when they cut the head off the chicken I turn my face aside that not fall down in a faint...I couldn't do it. But I guess, they splashe on my food womthing that day. I didn't know anything about this. And why I had to kill waitress? She was obedient servant, whoever wanted she could go with and sleep with him..."

"So, they set you a trap!"

"Yes, sure, but it is not only for that trap'

"Is there another reason?"

"It is high time to pay off old scores with Sani. Enough about his ambitious and plying with us! Stop acting like he owns my home, restaurant and family!"

"But if you kill him, you'll go to jail!"

"No, they won't jail me!"

"How do you know?"

"I know. They can kill me but not arrest me. Just don't look at me like that and everything will be alright, I am keeping a lot of secrets."

Malikajdar warned.

"Sani's helpmates would never be going to let this go. They will kill you."

"The Chief militia promised to protect me"

"Very well! And why you are telling me all these things?"

Kursumoglu explained simply:

"Sani is your blood enemy!"

"Everyone knows it." Malikajdar answered coldly.

Shikil said:

"I decided that you also wanted his death"

"Who told you? Is that chief militia?"

"No! He doesn't know about my thoughts."

Malikajdar asked ironically:

"Maybe you have got a holy sense?"

"Aga, don't laugh at me, I know what I am telling"

"Why the chief militia wants Sani to be killed?"

"He doesn't want to pay him. He knew that when he gets out of prison he will demand payments from him per month"

"If he doesn't want...let him arrest Sani and lock him up again"

"It's not the district militia's business to arrest him. He has a powerful protector."

It seemed Malikajdar was tired and he asked:

"What do you want from me?"

"I want your help"

"I am seyyid, not a killer!"

Kursumoghlu smiled.

"I know, Aga!"

"And then..."

"Right after he is killed it will be difficult in the first days. And I want you to hide me"

"But he said he'd protect you"

"Yes, he did"

"Well, so then what are you so excited about?"

"I don't believe him. If I kill Sani who will protect me then? And they benefit from what I've done, and then finish me off. But if you help me. If you help me no one will touch me"

Malikajdar Aga didn't answer. He looked at his beads that he rounded. Kursumoghlu accepted this silence gratefully.

"Thank you, Aga. I have one more favor to ask"

"Please, Shikil!"

"Aga, I would like you to be to act as a mediator and reconcile with me my uncle"

Malikajdar abstained because he knew the whole story. Kursumoghlu repeated:

"Aga, you're the only one he'll listen to. You know well my Shirshir uncle"

Aga shook his head.

"My child, I'm worried he's not the same man. Career and money completely ruined him. Yes, he's flying way up high and one day he will fall down and then he will understand all this. And why you want to reconcile with your uncle."

He's complacent, and he has an inflated ego!"

He didn't say his real plan.

"Aga, you know, my mother Kursum is ill, she wants to meet her brother"

Malikajdar Aga didn't trust in Shikil, but anyhow, he said:

"I am ready to help you, but your uncle probably is not the type of man you deserve."

Kursumoghlu knew that he was right, said:

"What do you advise me to do?"

"Don't be in a hurry. There will be soon the cases that can cause a truce between you."

When Shiri Shiriyev was born his sister Kursum was twenty. His father worked at the rock quarry in the village and went to work walking every day.

Father Shiriyev came back home from war like a sick and became mad. He often drank and wanted to forget his pains. He hated his village where he was brought up. But he loved the boiling life of the village and sometimes he took his family to the village cinema club and watched the films.

Soon his daughter Kursum went astray and was seduced by the boiling life of the town.

Though father Shiriyev was a heavy drinker, he was patriarchal man and followed the customs of the village. He turned out of the house his daughter who was beside herself with passion. After, he couldn't live to a great age and soon died.

Mother Shiriyeva sold her house for almost free and moved to the settlement because of local people's reproaches in their address.

She used to clean the offices to keep soul and sounds and bring up little Shiri. She cursed her daughter because of her husband's death and never forgave her for the rest of her life.

He served in the army in Baku. Then with the support of his future father-in-law he entered a military college and after finishing the school served in the Red Army for some time, got married to the daughter of Colonel. Then he was transferred to the reserve because of his illness, this time he was supported by his general father-in-law – he was appointed as Director of the big farm.

He led a subtropical state farm in the Absheron district covered the large territory. There was a kolkhoz surrounded by several villages.

The talent of the former officer was recognized in a short time. He revived the destroyed sovkhos and nobody believed that the former officer could do his best to own the farm well.

Shiri had spent the majority of his life among the military and that's why he liked to order. He's used to living with orders. He was major in the Army. He looked like a serious person, but in fact, he had strange inner features. And he was funny a little bit.

As soon as he took up the job, he started to act as a clown. He was forming the workers like soldiers and instructed them the rules. He taught them how to turn to the left and right.

Soon the general knew about his son-in-law's behavior and called Shiri to his office, scolded him.

"Sovkhoz is not a military unit!

Don't show affectation!"

Shiri didn't agree with him, said:

"Let them study, General! They will need it during war!"

The General mocked:

"Who are you going to fight?"

"As far as I'm concerned, war's already started, general! The azerbaijanians are being deported from Armenia!"

The General said hopelessly:

"I have got the news. But Moscow would never let them to be expelled from Armenia."

Shiri shook his head.

"Even the central Government can't stop Armenians"

"How do you know?"

"I have seved together with them. I know Armenians well."

The General said:

"Do you think that the Armenians can divide the country? No, they can't! All attempts any and all attempts aimed at dividing the country which constituted a serious threat to peace and stability in the Soviet Union and the regions will be rejected and punished! I think everything will be calmed in a month or two."

"I don't think at all! Our fitght with Armenians is coming up!"

The General concluded:

“However, the sovkhos workers can’t be fighters, Shiri. You need a regular Army to fight!”

After reproach Shiri was calmed a little bit, but he continued to order workers of the sovkhos and teach them. But the workers didn’t follow his orders regularly.

His support was strong. He protected his big farm as carefully as possible. But he never thought that one day sovkhos would turn into his own property.

But he worked hard, day and night.

The Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse and sovkhos was very attractive piece of property to be owned.

Shiri could be out of the game in this grab if the General Ivanov wouldn’t support him. Sovkhos was like a hunk of butter and there were too many people who wanted to grab the first thing that comes to hand. There were big cattle-farm, milk factory, the largest fruit gardens and fruit processing plant in sovkhos.¹ There was was a big working poultry farm where sometimes visited on an excursion school children to. So sovkhos was in a good condition.

¹ Sovkhos or Soviet farm (Russian), abbreviated from “sovetskoye khozyaistvo (sovkhos)”, is a state-owned farm. The term originated in the Soviet Union, hence the name.

Shiriyev was pleased with his life and lucky with his wife too.

Albina, his wife, was a daughter of General. She was very kind to her family and a pretty woman. They have a boy who was seven years old. The boy was born late, he was the only favorable child of his family and grandfather.

Shiri had no contact with his sister Kursum, because of family customs. His wife didn't interfere in the relationships between brother and sister before.

Time passed by, Kursum got rich from her business. Kursumpghlu Shikil found the way to kind heart of his uncle's wife. And once the General's daughter shared her thoughts with her husband.

"I think would be better to reconcile with your sister!"
But he disagreed with his wife.

"She stained our family's name!"

Albina tried to persuade her husband:

"Years passed by! Now she has elder daughter and son, the same age with you."

"Her daughter is also as shameless as her mother. She is a sweetheart of a criminal figure."

Albina knew about that and said:

"But Gulu sayas Sani is her husband, not a lover. Shikil cousin is kind too. Recently he came to me and blamed of you a little bit. He said, he came to you. but you refused from him..."

Shiri got angry.

"Do they think you're a lawyer?"

The General daughter said softly:

"My dear, your sister is now sixty, she is old enough. Forgive her!"

"It is impossible!" Shiri shouted.

"Don't shout at me, please!" Albina shouted too. "Kursum is one of the rich women in the city. She has much money, many friends among high rank officials. She meets with religious figures, but you..."

"Money is not a measure of honour," Shiri tried to put an end to this unpleasant conversation.

But she insisted on this topic.

"The relatives should support each other"

"Let's stop talking about this now, okay?"

Albina kept silence for a while, then added:

"Your sister is terminally ill. She will die soon, Shiri"

"She will never die!"

"Don't do it, you'll regret it."

"Never!"

Albina was offended, she turned on her back to her husband.

In spite of minor quarrels they lived together happy under her father's support. But it sometimes alerted her.

The General came to them suddenly in the early morning. He said in a hurry:

"Don't worry. I have come to tell you that I have got new appointment from Moscow, of course, not so high as I wished, but I didn't refuse"

Albina whispered:

"Be quiet, the baby's asleep!"

The General began to speak softly:

"Warrant of appointment was issued last night! I must be in Moscow today!"

"Without you, we're in trouble!" Shiri said. After learning about the position that her father would take in Moscow, Albina dissatisfied.

"You would need to have agreed to take this job, Pa! It is not actually for you!"

"Yes, I know, it is difficult for me to accept it, but I can't stay in Baku. Better to go to Moscow!"

"Why?"

"These meetings will be ended not good. The Army will interfere one day!" he explained. "If like that, I can't stand outside. I need to go against my friend by BTR and tanks. But I can't do it! Never!"

Shiri changed the topic.

"They will hurt me! Don't you see that sometimes they have problems with me...When you leave for Moscow they wouldn't stop!"

The General calmed his son-in-law:

"Don't worry! I will ask Malikajdar Aga to take care of you! I will visit to him before flight!"

"What can he possibly do? He is simply a religious figure, not a minister."

"He is bigger than a minister! Don't be boaster, and you will see!"

At least three or four cars stopped in front of the place of worship at midday. They were military cars. They were high rank officers, the General was ahead. The guard ran to the stall where Aga was in; the gates opened immediately and Aga was ready to meet the General. He was informed in advance and that is why he got out of the stall to meet the respected guests.

Aga hinted at officers who accompanied the General:

"You let the General come ahead of you all hid behind him...It is not according the charter!" And smiling he shook their hands one by one.

The military officers confused a little, but the General valued his joke.

"That's half my trouble, Aga!" he said. "They can leave their commander and run away in hard times"

Malikajdar aga called his assistants Seyfal, Mizi and Khalis, they also welcomed the guests, then Aga said:

"This way, please, come on! We have prepared something for your visit."

The General didn't come in, said:

"I have no time, Aga! Thanks. The military aircraft is waiting for me."

Malikajdar got surprised:

"Where are you going?"

"I have just come to say you 'goodbye' and he moved a little bit away from his officers." I have something to tell you. Let us step aside"

The General saw a question in Aga's eyes, continued:

"I was invited to Moscow. I am going to continue my service in the capital"

"Good luck!"

"But I would like you to know that I am always your friend not depending on the events that happening now"

Malikajdar was pleased and shook his head.

"I know it, General. And what about our dealing?"

"It is very difficult to say now, Aga. You will contact the Captain" he showed the officer who accompanied him. " Then we will see how things are going on"

Malikajdar Aga watched the young Captain standing not far away them, asked the General:

"The money will be given to Captain?"

The General shook his head.

"Yes, he is a trustful person"

"Ok, we will see"

The General paused a little, then continued:

"I have a request for you, Aga!"

"Please..."

"Take care of Shiri Shiriyeu!"

"I'll help your son-in-law any time when he calls for help. You know that I am faithful in friendship!"

The General thanked him.

"God sake you, Aga!"

"Don't forget us, General!"

The General softly embraced the little man and rapidly turned to his car stepping like a soldier.

-XXXXII-

After the guests left they came in stal. It was cold outside. Malikajdar looked like tired and Seyfal felt it, but said:

"Aga, I know you are tired, sorry, water-carrier Piri is waiting for you."

"Let him come in" Aga said.

"After General water-carrier Piri! What a contrast it is!" Khalis tried to joke with his father.

Water-carrier Pirim came in and he walked up to Aga with quick steps, shook the others hands and took his seat where they showed him. Aga asked softly:

"But I told you if you be needed I would find you"

"I am sorry, Aga, I have heard something and come here to know from you if it is true or not?"

"What do you mean?"

"Aga, they say Sani was freed and he is out of prison now"

"It is not Sani, but his helpmates"

"You mean the Ravils, Aga?"

Malikajdar shook his head, that meant he confirmed the information. Piri stood up obediently and apologised and said:

"Let me go out, Aga. Thank you."

"No, sit down" said Aga. "I have something to tell you"

Piri had a seat again and relaxed a little.

"You are welcome, Aga" asked with anxious: "Don't you know when Sani gets out of jail?"

Maikajdat said frankly:

"I suppose, in recent days. Last time I told you, I repeat it again, Piri, my brother, get the bad thoughts out of your head. Accept the situation!"

Piri grew black, said frightfully:

"Aga, Aga...."

"What?"

Piri threw out the grey hairs that covered his forehead, and showed scars like hieroglyphs.

"Aga, my forehead is burning! These were written on my forehead by razor!"

Since ten years it is burning. Touch on here, Aga!"

Malikajdar didn't touch to his forehead, the story was known to him, put his hand on his shoulder, said:

"Well, what's done is done, Piri. Sani is now sixty. I guess he's too old to be dangerous, and not too old to be too dangerous, either. He is close to death.

Don't be so troublesome, you should not pay attention to that any more."

"There will be no concession! I will spurn my adversary and avenge my enemy Sani!" Piri suddenly clenched his fist.

Malikajdar explained his thoughts again:

"At your age, it won't be easy in prison!"

"I will kill him, after, what will be, will be."

"But don't rely on my help" Malikajdar warned.
"Sometimes no money, no words help"

"I will revenge him!"

Malikajdar put his hands in the sky and said:

"God knows, I did everything I could to get you to give it up."

"Be comforted, Aga. Write this sin for me! It is not your job! You only bless me, that is all!"

Malikajdar decidedly refused of blessing him.

"I can't bless murder"

The he changed the topic.

“Is your car functioning?”

Piri didn’t make complaints as he knew Aga’s strange features.

“Yes, thanks God that it is operating. Don’t worry, I will do my best to carry water to the place of worship and your house.”

When Piri got out of jail eight years ago he came to the place of worship to ask for help. He said that no one wants to give him a job. Malikajdar asked for him a water-carrier car with ten tons load. So Piri was given KRAZ, and he began to carry drinking water to village schools and kindergardens, kept his soul and sound.

“If you have nothing to tell me, with your permission I will go...” Piri said.

“Go, but try your car be always functioning’ And then aske Khalis to see off Piri.

-XXXXIII-

Piri’s a lot of things, of course. His life was accompanied by bad things from his childhood. When he was small he went to jail for stealing. He was not just quiet in juvenile detention. The unlucky children joined together and attacked the cruel warden at the prison and wounded him. And then he got another five years. As he was a

minor he was taken out of the children's colony and sent to Siberia.

And it just happened that he fell into the hands of Sani in the same barrack.

There were twenty prisoners inside. And there were three or four muslims gathered around Sani. Christians united under the leadership of a thief in law Kulik by name. But the appearance of Piri in prison was as if the dream and Sani took a distance from him. Nobody knew the reason.

However, the Christians also did not

let him near them. Piri stayed in the middle, everybody made him to do different tasks: he had to control the stove during the cold winter nights, in addition, a chamber pot was kept in their cells and he had to carry out them, then to clean the shoes, sweep the barrack, wash it, etc. If Piri was a little bit late or didn't carry out any of the prisoner's will he was beaten to death.

There was a secret rivalry between groups and it never turned into open competition. They didn't interfere in the affairs of each other. Muslims were less than Christians but the last ones couldn't overcome them.

Sani was strong and had a strong influence over them and every one avoided meeting him. Even the controllers of the prison avoided him. He was mad a little bit and had heavy fists like stone.

Kulik had also killed a person, but he was pleasant person and always was sleepy. It was deceptive mask. One who didn't know him could be victim of this mask. Kulik was flexible and could know how well to conduct the razor.

The controllers of the "zone" left a bad name of themselves, they were cruel. They could take any prisoner who broke the rules to the punishment block. After that prisoner got very feared of a merciless voice of the controller and there were very little prisoners who got out of the punishment block without losing his humanity.

The head controller of the barrack was a Russian who was brought up in Baku. He was recently appointed to the "zone" and was working at least for six or seven months. He was interested in some new and fresh phrases that he heard from prisoners. When he heard something he immediately ran to chief to inform him and said the news that he got recently:

"Chief, they are under preparation. They will run away from prison!"

"How do you know?" Are you Sherlock Holms?" The chief stinged him.

The new controller insisted on, and at last the chief agreed with him.

The new controller watched with interest a while how the prisoners were hurting Piri. He knew several words in Azerbaijan and used them sometimes. He entrusted Piri easy tasks for a time.

One day new controller said to Piri who washed up the cabinet.

“Homie, come on, sit down!”

He gave to him who sat on the stool half white bread with fried meat inside.

“You eat here! If you take it to barack they will grabb it from you!”

Piri was deeply moved by this kindness. He was eating the bread taking it by both of his hands and not looking even around. The bread was salty and wet by his tears. Head controller said with false softness:

“I feel sorry for you. I see that you are hurt by both of two groups. But you hav only a year to be freed. If you help me I will do my best to help you too.”

“I am ready to help you!”

The controller continued:

“We know that your mother is Russian. And why you can”t speak Russian well.”

“It makes no difference, I will help you. Or you will be passed away”

Piri put his hands on his breast.

"I will be thankful to you, chief! What would you order to me?"

The controller looked at him very attentively.

"From now on, what you hear in barrack or in zone you will inform me. Ok?"

Piri shook his head and the controller stood up and took truncheon and he ordered:

"Stay strong and be quiet!"

Piri looked at him surprisingly, then he stooped to him.

The controller suddenly struck at him, Piri's face was in blood. He cried because of pains.

"Why you are beating me, chief? I just agreed with you!"

The controller got pleased and smiled at him.

"You, crazy boy! I am beating you because of your favour. When you return to barack let him think that you were punished.' He threatened him again shaking his truncheon." Now, you may go. But keep your tongue and don't lie me!"

Piri recovered in several days. He willingly came up to the window of the laundry everyday and informed the controller all he heard and seen. When he finished he was asked:

"That is all?"

“Yes, that is all!”

“Then, get out!”

They took new prisoners to the zone in spring. A prisoner whose nickname was Advocate was taken to their barrack. The prisoner was ill. They whispered with Kulik under the blanket for some minutes and then they placed him near the stove that he could sweat and recover. And soon it was known that Kulik did listen to him.

One day Piri returned to barack from laundry. He had stomach-ache in a sudden. He went to the nearest brushwood. Suddenly he heard something, two persons stood near him and was talking. They were new-comer and Kulik. Kulik said with anger:

“In the name of God, I can’t say the place of it. But I can say that I hid it in a secret palce. We will share it as brothers after prison. Don’t doubt! I promise as Kulik!”

New prisoner answered ironically:

“Perhaps, you like your name? Hey, blockhead guy, I have given to you this name! Don’t tell me a story!”

Kulik lowered his voice.

“I will never forget your kindness, my friend! But don’t make me to tell you the secret place!”

The “Advocate” coughed and said:

“Brother, what you have hid belongs to all of us, not only to you!”

Kulik raised his voice again:

"But I was arrested only! You haven't known what hell I have passed by! But they couldn't make me to tell them the place of money!"

"That's why every one likes you! But now your friends are in need of money! Tell me the place of money. Your share will not be touched. I am a guarantee!"

Kulik thought for a moment, then said decisively:

"The money will remain in the place where I hide until I get out of prison!"

The new prison answered sorrowfully:

"Ten years ahead! But money will be rotten until you get out of prison!"

"And I am here rotten" Kulik murmured. "Oh, if only I could run away from here!"

New-comer said:

"It is difficult to run away here! Ten km around here there is nothing except fields. Give up your mind! It is impossible!"

Kulik said indifferently:

"Look, then money will be ruined under the ground! If only I were said, you, stupid guy, when you were arrested, you ought to betray every one. Why you owned everything? Why you stood in karsers and electroshocks?"

New-comer listened to him ironically:

'Don't chatter, my friend! No one ran away behind you! I will be got out of prison at least in a month. The plan of my running away is already ready! What do you think, what I am doing here?'

Kulik's face shined.

"Well, but why you are questioning me? You ought to tell me as soon as you came!"

"I wanted to examine you!"

"Let me kiss you! I missed for my Moscow, white-stoned city!"

"Don't be so glad! And forget Moscow! Those papers that will be in your hands you won't be able to cross even the Ural mountains, they will grasp them immediately. You will have to spend your days in Kazakhstan or in Middle Asia."

"Let it be in the end of the world, but I would be in freedom, brother! Tell me, how you will organise running?"

"We will talk about it after! It is late? Let us go!"

When they moved away from brushwood Piri went out of his place. There was hate placed in his heart to prison and controllers, and a solidarity to his prisoner mates. Piri decided to be silent about this talk.

But there was such an event took place in the prison and he had to break the prisoner's solidarity. When he

woke up in the morning he saw Kulik put on his boots. He said indecisively:

“Brother, you have put on my boots”

Kulik answered indifferently:

“You also put on my boots by mistake!”

Piri looked at the members of his group and feared. His boots were old but in good condition, the controller gave to him.

He put on Kulik’s boots in silence.

Piri drove the hand-cart to the laundry.

In a month Kulik was caught in a sudden far from “zone” where he wanted to take into the boat and dragged him to the prison. They took all to karser who was related to running. Kulik’s group was scattered. Sani was pleased with this event and from now on his helpmates ruled the barrack.

When Kulik got out of karser he was ill, no one recognized him. He was spitting blood. Pir was not afraid of him anymore. And he counted his days, there was only one step left to be freed.

At midnight four persons attacked him and put into his mouth rages. They made tents by blankets so that the light of candle was not seen by controller. They made illegal proceedings for Piri.

Kulik turned to the participants of that illegal court.

"Borthers, what is the punishment of the man who betrayed his brothers?"

The voices raised up:

"Death!"

Kulik asked Sani whom he invited to court respectfully:

"Now it's up to you! You decide! This betrayer is your countryman!"

Sanka looked at Piri scornfully.

"To kill is easy! If you kill him your prison sentence will last more. I am against the killing. He will be punished by other way!"

One of the prisoner suggested:

"Let's write on his breast the word 'betrayer'. He wouldn't betray anymore!"

Kulik adopted the suggestion.

"Yes, a good idea! But not on his breast, but forehead! Sani, do you agree?"

Sani shook his head and said that it was a fair decision.

They put the "painter" of the barrack under the blanket and explained to him the task that he should do. The "painter" took out of his pocket needle and ink. Piri threw out his mouth rages and began to beg Sani.

"Sani, brother, I will be the dust of your legs, the dog at your door, don't let them to write on my forehead, let them write another place..."

Sani said scornfully:

"Shut up, scoundrel! Not quite, if that's all right by you. You totally humiliated us before Russians!"

When the "painter" started Sani said:

"Take this rascal's head, hands and foot firmly, don't let him move!"

Tattooing on his forehead the word "betrayed" pained Piri's heart deeply.

-XXXXIV-

Malikajdar was in a good mood during the dinner; he liked fish food. Seyfal had have a dinner with him. Khalis returned back, Malikajdar said to him jokingly:

"My son, come on, we can't eat without you, come, come on..."

Khalis pointed to the fish on the plate of which left only head and tail...

"My father, you are complaining of your appetite in vein"

"Yes, but you were late long!"

"Piri insisted on, father!" he said and took some bread.

"What does he want again?"

"He says find me the gun, I must kill Sani, agaoghlu!"

Seyfal said:

“You would better tell him, you crazy man, what the sanctuary is for you? Is it a military unit?”

“I told him. He said what he would do then? I asked him but why you hide your gun with two barrels under the seat of your car? He said it was long enough! I said then cut it and tie your belly, it is better than a pistol”

“And what else? Did he understand?” Seyfal asked joyfully.

“I suppose he realized.”

Malikajdar was not pleased. He said:

“You wouldn’t say so! He may go and kill him!”

Khalis said indifferently:

“It makes no difference to us. If one rascal will kill the other rascal it is not so bad.”

Malikajdar frowned. But he felt that Seyfal was also pleased with Khalis.

-XXXXV-

At this time Mizi and Songulu entered the room.

Songulu said:

“Hello, Aga! Glad to see you!”

It was the first time that Songulu called him as “Aga”. Malikajdar appreciated it and said kindly:

“Is that a friendship, man? You don’t come, you don’t visit to me...”

Songulu was an old merchant. He and his children lived in a peace and in good condition. They earned much money, but they lived simply, and they obeyed the government. He had two shops and a bread-baking plant in the village. He bought also some old objects in the city and tried to keep them in secret.

As Aga welcomed him he opened his mouth:

"I have come here heartily, Aga! Our grandfathers were friends. You also accept my friendship"

"Well, Songulu, my cousin, I shake your friendly hand. I have seen only good attitudes towards me when we were working together with you. You can trust me" Then he also reproached him:

"I suppose that tatars arrival didn't trouble you"

Songulu tried to convince Malikajdar.

"Aga, don't think that I am afraid of those throat-cuts of Sani. Before I have told Seyfal several times my wish, every time his answer was that I have to wait. I would to wait but there is an urgent matter arised...'

"What is the matter?"

Songulu began to speak slowly:

"Jinni Jani's wife is my wife's family. Though we have not much closeness but she sometimes comes to us. As she told Jinni Jani is not a friend fo Sani anymore. Sani is his enemy. And he wants to kill Sani."

Malikajdar said:

“Probably you mean Jani who is selling old rages in the market?”

Songulu confirmed.

“Yes, Aga! Jani is a skillful person and he made much money selling rages”

Malikajdar got informed well befor and he had precise information abut him. He knew that Jani made money not only because of rages, but stolen goods dealing. But he didn”t want to change Songulu”s mind, breathed a little bit:

“Well, what was the reason of Jani”s hatred to Sani? Why he wants to kill him?”

“Some years ago Jani asked Sani to woo for his elder son. So he went to ask in marriage for his son to his helpmate Yanig Rushtu”s daughter, and all expenditures of the wedding made by himself. I remember well that wedding.’

No one could go out of the party because of Sani. They played until morning, danced as much as they could. The singers sang until they tired. After this grandiose wedding party they discovered that the bride was not virgin...”

“Wow!’ Malikajdar got surprised.

Songulu continued:

“The bride didn”t want to tell name og that person who spoiled her virgin. She was afraid of that person

and said that he could kill all our family. But father and son pressed on the bride a little bit, then they knew that it was Sani who spoiled her virginity. Jani decided to take vengeance on his enemy, but acted carefully. He kept the bride in his house as if nothing happened. They hid this shame. They didn't let the bride go out. She even couldn't go to his father's house. But the guy couldn't have a chance to kill him, because Sani was arrested. Now, Jinni and his son are waiting for him. They are looking forward to revenge"

Malikajdar shook his head.

"This is good news. And what about father and mother of the daughter-in-law? Did he allow them to come in their house?"

Songulu explained.

"Jani is not in good relations with Yanig, but bride's mother sometimes visited to her daughter. But they don't let them be alone."

"I don't think that the bride's parents are not aware of that'. Malikajdar doubted.

Songulu shook his head.

"Who knows? If Yanig knew he would never tell that, he looks like a slave, he would never go against Sani! Jani is quite different person! He is not afraid of Sani. But he is looking for support and know that we are friends. He sent his wife to us for an answer. She will come tomorrow again. What should I say?"

Malikajdar took out of his pocket rosary and rounded it a bit, then said carefully:

"You will speak on behalf of yourself not me, and beat about the bush, and tell him that Malikajdar is ready to be a friend of his enemy"s enemy..."

-XXXXVI-

A week passed when the General left Baku Shiri"s rainy days started. He was in courts the whole time, scandals and inspections started to trouble him. The controlling units came and began to audit his office and affairs. That made him lose his head.

The meetings in Baku are continued on and all of this jarred nerves within the Government, and all those who were in the upper echelon of the government. There was a vacuum between people and government. New starving forces appeared in the city. They had attacked openly. They wanted to take away from the old officials all the fiancial resources.

He was forced by all sides and he tried to resist as well as he could. He thought that these difficulties were temporary and but the ring around him got narrowed slowly by slowly. The suggestions were more open and more strict. They talked on different amounts. Ahd in

addition to that he was proposed to the post of sovkhos director in Absheron district around Baku.

Head of sovkhos account department Albina khanum advised him:

"Say yes, quickly, or your nose will grow as big as a cucumber. If the works will be worse we shall go to Moscow'

Shiri listened to his wife silently, but didn't agree with her.

"I will fight till the end"

"Don't be silly, dear, and don't persist in!"

"Their proposals are not just fair!"

Albina was on the verge of tears, she said:

"Your justice seeking will trouble us. Go to Malikajdar Aga, consult him, listen what he advises..."

Shiri kept silence for a moment, said unwillingly:

"Better you go to Aga. I don't think he is in good relations with me. But he respects you, can listen to you..."

Albina khanum couldn't find a chance to go to sanctuary. A sad event happened. Kusum died in a sudden. And the day of the funeral, uncle and cousin stood near by near like strange people, they didn't even look at each other. They listened to the people who came to the funeral silently and at the same time expressed their gratitudes for condolence.

All officials of the district took part in funeral ceremony. There were people who wanted to take his position among the participants. Shiri understood from their surprise that they didn't know about the close relations between Kursum and Shiri. Funeral was grandiose, Kusumoghlu spent money as much as he could.

The funeral ceremony brought some kind of lucidity of minds; the hands that pressed Shiri became empty and he could breath now freely. The death of his sister Kursum brought to him support. There was nobody who could hurt him. An so the basement of the warm relationships between uncle and cousin laid from now on.

The fortieth day of his late sister took place more ceremonial. Too many people invited to the ceremony! There were several ministers in the ceremony. According to Albina's persistence General Ivanov arrived from Moscow.

In fact the cooperation between uncle and cousin was effective.

Hatam visited to Samaya periodically.

Her pregnancy was a little hard-won. She wanted to see her lover near her bed more often. She's upset even for the little things and shed her tears.

The midwife came up to her, looking at the balcony lowered her voice.

"Hatam brother, she doesn't listen to me. She doesn't sleep, she doesn't have a rest, goes to the yard, works, plants, takes care of poultry. I warned her, she doesn't listen to me...'

"I will make her to understand" Hatam entered the room.

Smaya met him in anxious.

"Agaoghlu, I don't want my baby to grow up without father" she said.

Hatam asked softly:

"What is the problem?"

"You told me you were away from those events! What happened? I saw meeting on TV, you took flag going ahead again"

Hatam tried to calm her.

"Don't pay attention! They are old plots"

Samaya believed him at once, and smiled.

After his helpmates got out of prison Sani was left alone. Time was ticking on his get-away. And, as if, he was not on the clock. Finally, he just couldn't take it anymore.

Today the controller who was enlisted by Sani was on duty. When Sani went out to walk after dinner the controller whispered in his ear:

"Today they are going to let you go out of prison."

Sani left the cell scornfully. He took his bag and then he was taken to chief. Though the chief internally was cruel his toddler cheeks looked like kind. He welcomed Sani and said:

"I have good news for you, Sani, but if you reward me I will give you the glad tidings. I will get out of prison soon."

Sanka answered ironically:

"I have got already this good news, chief! You won't need reward, sorry"

"But why you are not glad? You're just going to be out..."

"What should I be glad for? Here is good, I am respected, and here, my word is law! What I would need more?"

"Don't speak like that, Sani! Prison is not a good place. But freedom is a Freedom!"

Sani continued the talk unwillingly.

"Chief, there is a mess in freedom! Each adventurer consider himself to be a leader. He gathers some people around himself and actinf like a ruffian. You are afraid of being pressed. You don't know whose side to take of. Russians? Armenians? Popular Front? You don't know!"

The chief said willy-nilly respectfully:

"Your mind is good. You have informed everything. I don't understand why you chose this life?"

"Every bird flys by its own wings. As to me I would prefer to stay here."

"Of course, throat-cut like you better to stay here. I regret that it is not my responsibility, otherwise, I will make you to stay here!" The chief said angrily.

Sani moved away from the penal colony covered by the thick thorny wires, then he took a deep breath. He leaned his back over the car in the gravelled small playground and looked at a civil man who was waiting for him indifferently, right after he recognized him. He was Khasi who worked in the city police office. He welcomed Sani and said:

"From now on you will work with me"

The former prisioneer asked:

"But what about Aram?"

Khasi smiled slyly.

"Azerbaijan that is zealous for independence doesn't need armenians anymore. So we shall work together. We have hot you and the Ravils out of prison only for that."

Sani shook his head and said:

"I don't think we'd even have a common language"

Khasi said ironically:

"You haven't other choice"

"Why? Every one has a chance" Sani protested.

Khasi laughed.

"It doesn't concern you. You should know that you life now is in my hand. I am a VIP man. My post is a position of General. Soon you will call me General."

Sanka said:

"Let you be Marshal, no use, you are just Khasi"

"What don't you like in me?" Khasi asked.

"You have forgotten perhaps! Until yesterday you were licking the back of armenians in your office!"

Khasi laughed.

"You think I was alone whi licked armenians back?"
Then he put off his mask and ordered:

"Will you work with us or not?"

"If I will not?" Sani asked.

"Then all criminal worl will be informed about your relationships with police"

Sani said:

"Who will beleive in you? Have you arguments?"

"I want to inform you that all attempts of armenians have been registered and documented. These files are under our hands. Weighty papers! I can gift you the copies!"

Sani thought a little bit, then answered:

"No need! I agree!"

"It is strange that the coward like you kept the capital to be terrified for a long time! I would never think you to be such a coward! Let's go!"

"No! You go! We'll meet tomorrow in the city. I have to be met soon"

"No one will come!" Khasi laughed."We told your lover and your lover's brother that Sani would be got out of prison tomorrow"

-XXXXVIII-

There was no doubt for the exact information tha got from different sources. First Malikajdar asked Seyfal, then Mizi and after he asked Khalis to tell him their opinions. Discuss lasted long and that meant the importance of the news.

Aga said:

"Would be better to consult with the rest members of the family."

Soon everybody appeared. Bij Abdul looked preoccupied. He called the people to eliminate after-effects of the wind. The plastic sheeting and some other materials of the hothouses were torn.

Sarraaf was in the sleepy state; he recently returned from the sea, was deadly tired.

Hambaloghlu Rahib complained as soon as he entered the room:

"Aga, they stopped our cars. The Popular Front's people don't allow us to go to the Military Unit."

"You ought to find Hatam Aga!" Seyfal smiled.

"I thought about him and asked. They said he went to the city to take part in the meeting of the Popular Front. He would come soon..."

Malikajdar said in short:

"Sani was got out of the prison! He is in the quarry."

As if a cold water poured in the room. Malikajdar continued:

"You ought to keep under your hands strong young guys! They must be ready! The guards must guard the hothouses and kettles, not carry out the manure!"

Hmbaloghlu Rahib turned red. He made the guards to carry out the manure.

"Aga? I am guilty! The guards made mistakes. They slept without closing water-taps. The water washed up all fresh seedlings. I took them into the hothouses and let

them lose weight a little bit, and Mizi cousin informed Aga about my small fault" He smiled.

Mizi kept silence. Khalis hinted at him:

"Mizi"s guards! O, those guys!" he said ironically. "One of them is blind, the other is deaf, the another is lame...and so on...He gathered all invalids!"

They all laughed. Seyfal who sat on the right side of Aga said:

"From now on my uncle Mizi will be responsible for only kitchen and cleanness of the proper House! The guardianship of the House and Sanctuary will be the responsibility of Khalis. We will see what he can do in this position! Can he stand against the throat-cuts of Sani?"

Nobody got surprised of what he said. It was long-standing problem, the family needed the strong and decisive head as Khalis. In the light of recent disturbances in the country, it was very important.

When they talked about Sani Sarraf said:

"If Aga permitted me I would have killed Sani long ago!"

As if Malikajdar didn't hear him, he warned the people.

"Be vigilant!"

Sarraf whispered with pain:

"I can't bear it! Aga, I dream every night my father. You allow me and step aside, you will see how brave sons have come to this world!"

"You are silly man!" Malikajdar said in anger.

"Why, Aga?"

"Let us think that I allowed you, I assure you that you will be failed!"

"Why?" Sarraf repeated his question.

"Let your brother explain to you, why! I think Seyfal can try to make clear for you!"

Seyfal said with restraint:

"Aga, I have told him all the time that you can't overcome Sani alone. But he doesn't want to understand. Sani walks together with tatar guys. They will shoot you at once if you want to take gun!"

"Then, what to do?" Sarraf lost his hope.

Malikajdar said in a soft way:

"Be patient, and you will see what will happen." And he entrusted Mizi:

"Let the cook Shabali give us food!"

Barely they cleaned the table Mizi who was went out came back with Kashtan. The old sergeant was anxious.

"Aga, General rang me, aske me to inform you, The army will soon enter the city! Better to inform your close people who are in the barricades and streets"

Mizi asked in an uncertain manner:

"You think they will shoot unarmed people?"

Kashtan shook his hands.

"Things could be much worse."

"What do you think, can Moscow stop Iravan?" Seyfal joined the talk.

Kashtan shrugged his shoulders.

"Who knows?"

Suddenly the guard of the sanctuary entered the room hurriedly.

"Aga, Jinni Jani wants to see you, he is in the sanctuary!"

"Is he alone?"

"Yes, Aga, he is alone."

Malikajdar took out his pocket his rosary, then again returned it back into his pocket. He turned to Khalis and said:

"Take the guest to Sarraf's hut in the seashore. We shall come soon." The he turned to Kashtan and said:

"Sorry, soldier, I must go. Excuse me, I've got a thing. But it would be better to find a spare time and remember old days..."

-XXXXIX-

The Caspian sea was getting rough; the voice of waves filled the room through the windows. Malikajdar didn't permit the guest to stand up and welcome him, rapidly

came up to him and greeted, then he also sat near the guest on the carpet ground his legs folded. Seyfal and Mizi also greeted the guest.

Jani was anxious and said:

"Perhaps, you know that Sani got out of the prison."

"Yes, I know."

"Perhaps Songulu told you. I want to kill Sani..." He paused.

"Go on..."

"Sani dishonoured my family! I can't let him be alive!"

"How can I help you?"

"I don't want to be ruined in prisons after killing Sani..."

"You want this murder to be co-ordinated with high ranks officials?"

"Yes, but they wouldn't listen to you"

Malikajdar asked seriously:

"Why do you think so?"

"I think Sani has relationships with high ranks officials"

"If he has... why was he in prison?" Khalis smiled.

Jani tried to assure them.

"Maybe he has sent to prison to be protected?"

Malikajdar kept silent.

Khalis again said:

"However, Aga's relations are much more than the thief's one"

Jani said:

"Sani Absheronski is not an ordinary thief. I suppose he works on two jobs. He is related either to criminal world or the Government and doing the tasks required by police"

Malikajdar said:

"Imagine that this has been coordinated with the officials by me, but what will you do with your old friends? They may revenge you!"

"I can make them to understand, it will be not difficult. As soon as they know that he works on two jobs they will refuse from revenging me"

"I heard it is impossible to catch Sani. He is very flexible and careful. And always walking with gun."

"I will invite him to wedding!" Jani smiled bitterly.

"Whose wedding?"

"To the wedding party of my small son."

"When is he getting married?"

"According to our request Sani will fix the time"

Malikajdar adopted Jani's idea.

"You thought well. But Sani will not come to wedding alone. Most probably the Ravils will be with him."

"I have already thought about it. I will arrange them to sit together and my elder son will serve them. Sani likes fame. Their food will be mixed with narcosis"

Malikajdar got surprised of his rage.

"You want to kill all of them?"

Jani answered:

"No, Aga. I can't kill the Ravils. This narcosis will be prepared just for them to be moved away.' Jani kept silent for a while. "I entrust my family to your supportance, Aga. If I and my sons be killed please take care of my family"

Malikajdar promised and Jani stood to go out.

"As soon as time of wedding confirmed I will come to you"

Malikajdar said:

"Be careful! If you come to sanctuary frequently you will be suspected. Better send the news by a faithful person"

"You are right, Aga. But now it is difficult to find a faithful person."

He wanted to go out, but Aga stopped him.

"Why, don't go, have a dinner with me'

"You feed all people of village, Aga. Thank you. Next time." He said respectfully and went out.

-XXXXX-

Sani was not indulgent much more to his old thief mates, some of them he even didn't permit to come in and sent them back. The Ravils got surprised of that and Sani explained to them:

“The old relations can be obstacle for us!”

The Ravils were really displeased of that and once Asta said to him:

“Sani they are our helpmates”

Sani answered indifferently:

“These old thieves are useless! They had bored me in the zone. But here in the freedom I am not going to see them’

Takhta remarked:

“Thief is a friend of thief, they must be together or you think he must met the movie-stars?”

Sani looked at him scornfully.

“Stop talking!” He waved the razor in front of Takhta in a sudden and Takhta was afraid. “Or I’ll punish you!”

Sani welcomed Gulu and Kursumoghlu Shakil like close relatives. He didn’t feel the falsehood between the brother and sister, maybe he gre old or maybe he lost his carefulness in prison. But Sani expressed his condolences and then began to praise his former lover:

“Kursum was a clever woman. May God rest her soul!”

Kursumoghlu shed his tears after these words. He forgot his disgust for Sani.

Takhta listened to the talks standing nearby, he whispered to Asta:

“How he welcomed this son of bitch!”

Asta looked at him menacingly picked up his ears.

A little bit later Sani saw off his former lover's son then turned to the Ravils:

"Kusumoghlu agreed to give us his seashore house. Vey comfortable place. We shall move there later"

That was attractive news and Takhta swallowed his saliva; Asta smiled. Sani could get what he wished.

The Ravils couldn't know what to think. Sani let Sallaq Safi, a small pickpocket, come in the house and Yaniq who was called "betrayed" in prison. But he didn't want to see his old helpmate Jinni Jani. The reason was unknown, but Sani explained it as follows:

"I have my doubts as to him!"

"Why?" Takhta asked.

"He is much more diligent".

Asta tried to beg Sani.

"Jani is a faithful guy! How many times he came to us when we were in prison! He spent much money for us, but you don't want to see him. You doubt in vain! He is our people!"

Takhta also said:

"He welcomed you like king in his son's wedding party! Laid carpet in front of you! Can we forget it?"

"His son is also not so bad! We went and have seen; he adorned your ZIM like bride!"

At last Sani agreed and came to meet with Jinni Jani and his elder son! As soon as Sani came in Jani opened his arms and embraced him. His son did the same and kissed his hand.

Jinnioghlu said:

"The car is outside, Sani broher. Some months ago, as soon as you sent me a message I went to Guba, I took the car out of the haystack and came to the city; the best masters checked the car, and it is running like clockwork now.

Sani settled down and said:

"The car is not needed now. Let you keep it, when I need it I will tell you and you bring it to me...'

After some talks Jinni began to speak on the main point;

"I have decided to marry my small son and waited for your getting out of prison. I wish to share my joy with my faithful friends"

Asta said:

"Congraulations! When you are going to organise the wedding party?"

"I don't know!"

"You haven't ordered yet the invitation cards?"

Jinni respectfully answered:

"I would like Sani tell the exact date of the wedding and take part in party himself. He has good luck! I am

sure that my small son will be happy as well as my elder one.'

Takhta shook his hands willingly.

"This wedding should be fantastic!"

Jani smiled.

"It is because of you! Your participation should bring glory to the party!"

Sani asked:

"What about the preparation? Maybe you need something?"

Jani looked at him with pleasure.

"Thank God! We have everything!"

Sani didn't see them off, sitting said:

"I will tell you the date in two or three days and you'll order then invitation cards."

Jinni Jani took a deep breath and comforted.

-XXXXXI-

Malikajdar felt comfortable among fishermen. If he felt uneasy he used to go to the seashore, to his hut. Sarraf just returned from the sea and fishermen was cooking the fish. Malikajdar, Khalis, Mizi and Seyfal arrived just in time.

When they finished dinner Sarraf was anxious and Malikajdar right now feeling it asked:

"My cousin, what happened? You look like someone who is going to tell something?"

Sarraf mumbled:

"Aga, I didn't want to bother you. But I ought to tell. Recently I noticed that a new fisherman boat appeared in our area. They are swimming all day around our boats...'

Malikajdar kept silent. Sarraf shook his hands and said:

"Aga, if you permit us we will punish them..."

Seyfal was angry with him.

"Don't be silly. The sea is not yet our property. Any person may fish in any area of the sea."

Mizi waved his head:

"Now, don't start nothing,"

Malikajdar instructed Sarraf:

"Don't interfere!"

When Khalis went out behind his father he stopped for a moment and turned to Sarraf:

"Anyhow, you go to fishing by two or three boats'

Just two days later Sarraf came to the sanctuary with bad news.

"Aga, our nets disappeared!"

As a rule in the evening the fishermen spread nets; they pointed the fish nets with red floats and came back.

They called it the “fish-nets”. In the morning they used to go to the sea and could find easily the fish-nets.

“Does anybody come to mind?” Malikajdar asked, but he knew already who was he.

“I think it is the job of those new fishermen. But I told you and informed about them. You said not to pay attention to them!” Sarraf said.

Seyfal said with hesitation.

“Maybe it is because of negligence? Maybe the fish-nets were not firmly tied?”

Sarraf didn’t agree with his elder brother.

“We are speaking about hundreds fish-nets. If they were more or less two or three, yes, it could be understood!”

Malikajdar said:

“My cousin, don’t be anxious, we’ll solve the problem!”

And he authorized Khalis:

“Find out, who is he playing with us!”

Then he added:

“But as we agreed, everything should be in a nice way, my son!”

Upon Aga's agreement Khalis changed the security team of the house and instead of invalids and old person he gathered strong and flexible young people. But he gave the invalids other jobs that they could keep soul and sounds. Some of them was working now in the hot houses.

Mizi was hurt and one day he said to Seyfal:

"It seems to me that Agaoghlu doesn't know what he is doing. He gathered the youngest and unexperienced persons around himself."

But Seyfam understood that Khalis knew well his tasks.

"Probably he is going to fight!"

Mizi murmured:

"Cousin, you know that I have always served this house faithfully."

Seyfal joked:

"It seems in order to overcome Sani Absheroni faithfulness is not enough!"

According to Khalis instructions the walls of the yard of the house was built by stone, there was only one entrance in the yard. The trees were trimmed and the lamps were hung, control over everything was strengthened. The guards were watchful day and nights.

He made the small playing square for the children. Thus, he put the whole houseyard in order. The sanctuary looked like now festive.

Khalis was flexible and made his decisions right at once on foot. He sometimes was in the seashore, or he was walking and watching the hothouses, or he took part in the meetings in Baku.

-XXXXXIII-

Sarraf loved his brother's sons who were grown up already. Each time when he came to house he could find a time to visit to cousins. When Seyfal saw his brother playing with children in the yard he came up to him and asked him:

"What news about new-comer fishermen?"

"They are swimming around us, brother, we can't sell our goods in the market at least for ten days. They are watching us somewhere and when we set our fish-nets and come back, they appeared and damaged our nets in front of our eyes. Two or three times we ran after them, but we couldn't reach them, their boats' engine looks like an aircraft motor. But we have engine trouble..."

"Well, don't they fish?" Seyfal asked.

"They don't seem to fish, brother, they

Only want to damage the interest of us, that's all! They damaged lots of our fish-nets" Sarraf said and pointed to the house of Aga, added:"I have just told everything Aga!"

Seyfal asked:

"What did he say?"

"He is unhealthy a little bit. He said that Khalis would take measure..."

-XXXXXIV-

Shiriyev at last escaped with life and limb and started to live safe and sound.

Scope of the meetings, rebelliousness of some workers and common dissatisfaction couldn't make him to feel upset. Popular Front was going to turn into the strongest movement. There was a vacuum in the government. Most probably the sky of the country there will be covered with black clouds. Even this could not influence Shiri's mood.

Today as usual they went out of the house at eight o'clock. He drove his car himself. He used the driver only when he went to watch the area of the sovkhos. He went to work office and back to house together with Albina. His wife used to sit in the back seat of the car. In

the front seat was his son Bekhan, he was silent, didn't answer his father.

"Why he is in low spirits?" Shiri joked and asked Albina. "He didn't speak"

Albina khanum answered with a smile:

"Bekhan was offended with you. You didn't let him go to Moscow with his grandfather. He wanted to go to Moscow very much together with his uncle General! He had already prepared for the visit"

Shiri drove the car on the twining streets. He hited at his wife and said:

"You think, the confrontation between fathers and sons started?"

Albina didn't agree, said:

"It is not exactly like that. He is simply missing for his grandfather"

"Maybe we'll send him to Moscow? Let General take care of him a little bit"

Albina didn't agree.

"My father himself needs attention. In fact, you were right, not to let him to go to Moscow"

His son got off the car with Albina near the kindergarten and they went into the yard and saw the kindergarten teacher meeting them. Albina khanum wihispered something to the ear of her offended son

and the child shook his hand to his father and smiled immediately. Then she returned back to the car and sat on her seat. But the car didn't move.

"What did you say to him?" asked Shiri his wife.

"I told him that your father will take you to the wedding party in the village. That's why he felt well. Was I right?"

"Yes, I would take him...'

At eight sharp the car entered the yard of the administrative building of the sovkhos. The director liked the punctuality and demanded it from his workers too.

He was decided to be busy with fruit-growing services. All brigade-leaders, agronomes and other management staff members welcomed him and he smiled at them, though he was always gloomy and unpleasant towards them.

He called his assistant and ordered:

"Let the UAZ be ready, I will go the fields"

"The car is ready and standing behind the gate, chief! I warmed the motor in the morning, it is ready to drive" the assistant answered.

"I see you are shining today like a polished coin" Shiri addressed to his assistant who was well-dressed unusual.

"I will go to Jinni Jani in the evening, they have a small party before the wedding, I will go together with Dardayil. And would you come to the party tomorrow?"

"Yes, sure!"

"I know that Jani is your relative if I am not mistaken ' Shiri said indifferently:

"Yes, right. He is one of my late mother's relatives"

Shiri didn't like his relatives. But after his sister's funeral ceremony he couldn't run away from his relatives.

Jini Jani personally came to him and brought an invitation to the wedding party.

His assistant didn't understand the tone of the conversation and Shiri felt it and asked:

"Well, I see you have something to tell me?"

"A person came and is waiting for you' Assistant murmured.

"What he wants?"

"He says he was sent by Sani."

Shiri had heard his name before and knew that Sani was related to his late sister and her family. That is why he was upset. His assistant was born in the village and lived there and knew every one and every event taking place in the village. He informed the director.

"Well, you take care of him, I have a lot of works..."

But assistant continued:

"Better you listen to him."

Shiri turned back.

"What is his name?"

"Sallaq!"

"It is not a name!"

"Yes, it is nickname of a thief!"

Shiri laughed.

"Send him to Dardayil, he must understand the persons who had criminal past!" He took into the UAZ and started the motor.

Shiri reached the almond garden and got out of the car. An elderly woman who saw the director's car from a distant ran to welcome him. She was the head of the unit. Later some old women like herself approached him. They took up formation like soldiers and then as the director taught her head of unit said:

"Comrade director, the unit is formed according to your order!"

Shiri couldn't even say something the other UAZ was seen near them. He was Dardayil, deputy director. He got out of the car and ran to director in a hurry and whispered to his ear something.

Shiri was upset and pointed to the unit to go away.

Dardayil was anxious and said:

"What would I say to Sallaq? He is waiting for an answer."

Shiri asked:

“What do you suggest?”

“We must do it! Fifty thousand must be given to them!”

“Why we must?”

“Before you all directors did the same! I have changed two directors within ten years, you are the third one!”

“But you will never change me!” Shiri joked.

“I am very faithful to you and I never want to take your place!” The deputy disappointed.

“The soldier who doesn’t want to be the General is a bad one.”

“But now we are not talking about that!”

Shiri at last agreed with him and said:

“Ok. You say that sovkhoz always gave to him money?”

“Yes, once a year they came on behalf of Sani and took the money!”

“Once a year?”

“Yes! Sovkhoz was always under the control of Sani!”

“But I am here at least for three years. I haven’t seen anybody to come for money!”

“When you came here a person with burnt face came here and asked for money. I told him the director is new and just started to work. They had to wait. He went away and then later I heard that Sani was arrested. I have told you about that’

"Yes, I remembered, you told me something..."

"As Sani was in prison nobody came to sovkhos. Besides there were meetings in the country, everybody was busy..."

"Ok, let us think that I have agreed... and how can I find fifty thousand? Am I a banker?"

"Money is not problem. If you agree I will go to village and collect from my relatives, after we will return"

"Don't tell me a story!" Shiri cried. "If someone shouts a little, you're ready to say yes"

Dardayil tried to convince him of the truth of his words.

"But they all do the same thing."

"I am not all" Shiri got angry.

"But it is not so much! It is less than the amount we sent to Meydan for Popular Front!"

"They are different things! You ought not to compare the support for the people movement with this!"

"A man can't put himself on fire for money"

"The matter is not in the money but in the principle"

"I think it will end worse"

"For whom?" Shiri smiled. "General's one call is enough..."

"But now, who thinks General's important? The country is waving! Don't you see that how the people"

banished from the country the first secretary who planted walnut-trees on the corners of the streets?"

"You think I have to deal with every scoundrel?"

"You don't know Sani well"

"Don't fear me! Anyhow I can defeat him."

"He is not alone. There are VIP Persons behind him."

"Nonsense! Who is a thief and who is high rank official!"

"Believe me! When Sani's name is pronounced even my brother Songulu is shivering"

"You are so coward!"

Dardayil confused, insisted.

"Director, this is a very serious matter! If you refuse from money you must find for yourself a supporter. You can go to sanctuary to Aga or to cousin Shakil"

Shiri shook his hand.

"I will never go to anywhere! Increase the number of the guards around the sovkhos building, let them not permit to enter the strangers. Let Sallaq also go away!"

Shiri walked along the fields unwillingly. He couldn't collect his thoughts; he was worried. Soon he returned back to office. Dardayil welcomed him making haste and director was amazed. He asked:

"What is the problem?"

"Sani sent another person!"

"Where is he?"

The deputy looked at the yard and shoed hm a man who was sitting on the stairs. A stranger was smoking indifferently. Shir got very angry. He looked at an uninvited guest closely; his eyes was sharp as knife, there were traces on his cheek. It was difficult to fix his age.

He asked him:

"Who are you? What do you want?"

Teh mand didn't stand up and answered:

"First greet, then ask, director!"

The director said ironically:

"When you are speaking to the people older than you you must stand up, then talk about greetings"

"It is unknown who is adult. But I know exactly you are younger than me, that's all. "

"Enough! Who are you?"

"You can call me Yanig!"

"What are you doing?"

"I am a thief!"

Shiri knew for the first time that a thief confessed that he was a thief. He examined him carefully.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I have brought for you Sani's second message! Maybe we go into the cabinet?" Yaniq said.

Shiri cried at him stubbornly:

"I don't invite everyone to my cabinet! We have to talk here!"

"But our talks are secretly. And maybe the deputy should not know!"

"I trust in my deputy! Tell me what do you want! I am not going to waste my time for everyone!"

Yaniq smiled.

"We have not come to damage the sovkhos. After giving to us the amount we demand you can work here easily. Nobody will touch you."

"I don't need the thief's support. What do you want in short?"

"Never mind! Well, prepare for us one hundred thousands! I will come in the evening and take the money!"

Dardayil was anxious.

"But before Sallaq brother wanted fifty thousands?" Deputy asked.

"If you agreed at once the amount wouldn't be increased. The decision belongs to Sani!"

"Brother, we need time to gather this amount!" Dardayil begged him.

"If you promise to give the money, I will tell Sanit and get permission and he will wait for some days"

"For some days? What we should do then?" Dardayil trembled.

Yaniq shook his hand.

"In short, I advise you to agree. You have a chance..."

Shiri couldn't hold himself and screamed:

"Take your advice to yourself! Go and tell him that Shiri Shiriyeu doesn't recognize Sani or who else!

"You deputy will tell you who is Sani!" He stood up and without saying good-bye went away.

The director was late for a while and ran after him, took his hand and ordered his deputy:

"Call the police..."

The deputy didn't move, and his face turned white. He said:

"Comrade director, it is not the police job!"

Yaniq also didn't move at all. He said to director calmly:

"Did you hear? You won't break my hand, would you? I have told you Sani's message! The rest you solve between yourself and Sani! Leave my hand."

"No, I wouldn't! The police will take you from here!" Director insisted on.

The deputy wanted to enter the cabinet in hesitation but Yaniq said:

"Director, think before calling to police! You will repent for your behaviour after!"

"O, you threaten me?" and he slapped Yaniq in the face. "Do you know who am I?"

Dardayil ran forward and wanted to take him away.

"No! You can't, director!"

Shiri left his hand and Yaniq soothed the place of slap on his cheek and shook his head.

"You ought not to beat me. To beat the thief is very expensive!" and moved away in a hurry.

Dardayil didn't convince him of the truth of his words anymore. Director changed his mind and said to him:

"You are right! I need to go to sanctuary!"

"You just go to the sanctuary!"

Shiri agreed with him, but suddenly there was a call in the office. Director was called to the Ministry urgently.

"I will go to sanctuary afterwards. But don't tell anything to Albina khanum. Tomorrow we shall go to the wedding party. If she knows she will be worried...'

Dardayil was in the comfortable cabinet of the director and busy with letters and papers. After the director left the office he wanted to reply the letters and worked until dinner break. He wanted to have a cup of tea. There was nobody in the office, everybody went to have dinner. He prepared for himself tea, then he returned to the cabinet and later he was tired of working and stood up, came to the window, began to smoke. Suddenly he saw through the window two well-dressed men getting out of the car in the yard. He thought that they were high officials. But when he saw Yaniq getting out of the car his heart began to beat. They entered the building passing by guards confidently. Dardayil couldn't smoke the cigarette till the end, the door opened sharply. One of the guests who

was thin immediately came up to him and punched him on his face strongly. One more blow made by the fat person. They were the Ravils.

"Perhaps you should take Sani's words as the end of the discussion." Takhta said loudly. After them Yaniq entered the cabinet.

"Don't beat him! He is not a director! He is his deputy!" Yaniq said.

Takhta stepped aside and said:

"Sorry for that! We were mistaken! We don't know your director! Where is he?"

Dardayil was in blood and took out of his pocket handkerchief and said in a low voice:

"He went to the Ministry."

Sani's people stepped aside and whispered, then Asta said:

"No use to waste time here! Let us go, Sani will tell us what to do..."

After dinner Shiri returned to office and saw Dardayil among the workers. Albina khanum was also among them. There was a bruise under his eye, face and mouth were bloated. Deputy tried to hold himself proudly. Shiri listened to him and ordered his assistant:

"Ring to the district inspector!"

But Dardayil protested.

"You don't understand the seriousness of the incident, director! What you would say to police?"

Shiri confused.

"What will we do then?"

Albina khanum was greatly excited and said:

"Siri, my dear, call to Moscow!"

"No, you need to go to sanctuary! General is far away from here, he couldn't help urgently!"

Later the telephone rang and Albina khanum picked up the phone and answered. It was driver.

"Albina khanum, I am in the kindegarten, they say that the child was taken out..."

Albina got surprised:

"Who took the child?"

"The educator says that his grandfather"

Shiri and Daradyil looked at each other and turned white. Probably misfortune was coming up!

Albina khanum got very angry, she didn't suspect anything.

"What a nonsense you are telling? His grandfather is in Moscow! Maybe you are mistaken! Maybe you went the another kindergarten?"

The driver said:

"Hold on, please. I am giving the phone to the educator!"

The educator said:

"Albina khanum, the child was taken! Late after dinner the children were playing in the yard, a black ZIM stopped in front of the gate and a Russian soldier came up and said that General is waiting in the car for Bekhan Shiriyev"

Shiri couldn't stand in it and sat down the chair. Albina asked:

"You did see the General yourself?"

"No, I didn't see. But don't worry, it happened before, general didn't get out of car, he used to send a soldier..."

Suddenly Albina turned to her husband and at last she understood what was going on, lost consciousness and, fell down the floor.

The paramedic called from the health centre tried to do his best to recover Albina. After the injection, and a little massage she regained consciousness. She wept a long and again lost consciousness. Shiri kept silent in trouble. The assistant stood frozen in front of the window and didn't know what to do. Even Dardayil didn't know what to do, he lost his mind. The phone again rang up, Shiri answered at once:

"Yes..."

"I need director..." a voice came out of the telephone.

"I am listening to..."

“Well, your child is in our hands. If you behave well, you will take him safe and sound! If you go to police...”

“What do you want?”

“One hundred fifty thousand...”

“But you wanted one hundred?”

“It is your fault. If you agreed for the first time... don’t complain... Hold on this telephone all day... We will call again...”

-XXXXXV-

Towards evening there was preparation for supper in the house of Aga. Except Seyfal and Shakil Qochu Khalis was at the table. Later Sarraf and Bij Abdul joined them, after Hambaloghlu Rahib came to have supper. As soon as they have finished the tasteful food that cooked by Shabli Malikajdar said to Rahib:

“We must take care of ourselves, soon the militaries will not keep their words...”

“As long as they comply with the terms of the duty... they are pursuing their career responsibilities... We will see what will happen...”

Malikajdar shook his head and turned to Sarraf:

“Well, my sister’s grandchild, you are smiling... You guys returned with good huntings...”

“Aga, we have plenty of fish...We have never seen a lot of fish like today...All fish-nets were full of fish. We hardly gathered all of fish”

Khalis whispered to his father something. Aga got pleased and said:

“You send to Hatam some of fish, let the people who are in barricades taste the fish-kabab”¹

Though some of them was displeased of the decision in their hearts, nobody protested. Seyfal asked carelessly:

“My brother, what happened to that boat running after you? Is it appeared again?”

“That boat is not seen anymore in our areas...Maybe they changed the area...’

Shakil Qochu said in a sleepy voice:

“Our boats never cross Sariqaya, do they?”

Sarraaf answered though he didn’t understand he old man’s interest.

“Dad, behind Sariqaya is the sea, open sea...There are not areas for fishing...Why you asked?”

Shakil Qochu said:

“I have heard on the radio, a fisherman boat was going to be drowned in those areas, but the oil ship saved them. I thought you were speaking about our boats...’

“No, Dad, our fishermen are safe and sound...” Sarraaf hinted to Khalis.

¹ Kebabs are various cooked usually meat dishes, with their origins in Middle Eastern cuisine. Many variants are popular around the world. In Azerbaijan a kebab is any of a wide variety of grilled meat dishes. Sometimes fish is also grilled.

Malikajdar as if didn't hear the conversation between Shakil Qochu and Sarraf, asked:

"Is there anyone at the reception?"

Seyfal answered:

"Yes, Aga, Piri is one of them, the other is cook Sabali and Songulu..."

"What water-carrier wants we know. And what does Songulu want?"

Seyfal answered:

"Sani demands money from his shops in the Targovi street, he fixed for him the deadline. He doesn't know what to do. That is why he has come... And the other one is Shabali."

"And what our Shabali wants?" Malikajdar smiled.

The cook Shabali was not imagined without smile.

"He's come for his brother..."

Malikajdar wanted to say something and this time the accountant of the sanctuary entered the room and put in front of Aga a letter.

"This letter was brought by Havarchi Hanifa" he said.

Malikajdar turned the letter to the right and left, said:

"When did Hanifa become a postman?"

"I don't know, Aga! I didn't ask him about that."

The village was big enough and you always needed a person who knew well its each corner. Havarchi Hanifa

was one of those persons. He used to distribute letters and invitation cards among the addressees, according to their request. He never made mistakes. Everybody admired him for his tasks. The matter was that he couldn't write and read, but he could keep in his mind all the people who lived in the village.

Malikajdar looked at the invitation card, said in a low voice:

"Jini Jani invites me to his son's wedding party on 19."

"Perhaps Sani also will be there" Seyfal said.

"It is a real chance, Aga!" Sarraf said.

"O, that's great! Upon your life! We can escape with life and limb from this scoundrel!" Bij Abdul said.

"To take vengeance on somebody is not our job! You remember this forever!" Malikajdar said.

Nobody dared to break the silence in the room.

The assistant entered the room, said:

"Aga, director of sovkhos Shiri Shiriyeu and his deputy Dardayil and the director's wife came to the sanctuary."

"Well, what they want?" he got angry a little bit.

"They need help. Sani's people kidnapped General's grandchild!"

Malikajdar got amazed.

“Wow!!! When?”

“Today!”

Malikajdar asked in a hurry:

“What the thieves demanding?”

“On hundred fifty thousand!”

Everything went dark before Malikajdar’s eyes.

“It can’t be!” He turned to Seyfal. “Cousin, I think we have not this amount?”

Seyfal answered unwillingly:

“We have only forty thousand, but it is not difficult to find money.”

Malikajdar asked:

“Seyfal, the rest of money take from our friends, then we shall return. You must find the money!”

“Poor child!” Shakil Qochu was sorry. “After that we can bury Sani!”

Malikajdar said:

“First of all, we must take the child from him and give to his mother! All the wealth of the world are less worthy than the tears of the innocent child!” He said and ordered: “Today or tomorrow the child must be given to his mother! Gather the amount what Sani wants!”

All relatives knew Malikajdar’s generosity, but no one didn’t understand than why Aga was so sorry for the stranger’s child and ready to sacrifice even his all wealth.

Sarraaf said: “Well, we have another way out, Aga! Why you tie our hands?”

"The door that you can open by money why you shed blood on that door?" Malikajdar answered.

Nobody answered.

Malikajdar continued later:

"Seyfal, do your best that Shiri can take his child back. After, God will help! We trust in God! But you take Albina khanum to Tidora khanum!"

Seyfal got out of the house in a hurry. Malikajdar took a deep breath and ordered Mizi:

"Send to the guests tea and some sweet"

Then he turned to Khalis and added:

"My son, I have not right to tie your hands anymore but follow the rules..." he stood up and came to the door, added: "I'm not feeling well!"

"What would I say to the guests?"

Aga said without turning back.

"You're on your own. And I will come back after my afternoon worship"

-XXXXXXVI-

Malikajdar and Khalis left the room. Sarraf and Bij Abdul were looking at Aga waiting anxiously.

"I need you, stay here and wait for me!" Khalis said and then he pointed to the sleepy Shakil Qochu. "Dad was tired, help him to go to his room"

Saraf and Bij Abdul took the hands of Shakil Qochu and left the house. Mizi returned back from the kitchen.

And Khalis walked up and down a bit, then stopped. His decision was as a rule unexpected, turned to the chief of guards who was standing near the door like a stone.

"From tomorrow you'll close the gates. Don't let the strangers enter the sanctuary as well as the house."

The chief of guards said yes and moved away. Mizi asked with amazement:

"Why so?"

"It's a measure of precaution to your own safety."

Mizi tried to understand him and asked again:

"What will the guard say to pilgrim-visitors?"

Khalis frowned.

"Let him find some reason"

"For instance..."

"Let him say that sanctuary stopped functioning for repair. If they don't believe, let him say that there are snakes in the sanctuary. It is very dangerous to pilgrimage."

Mizi couldn't find any other word to answer and kept silence.

Hambaloghlu Rahib put the stool far away from hot stove. He cleaned out his throat informing his presence in the room and asked:

“What kind of tasks should I perform, Agaoghlu?”

Khalis took the stool and came up to him, sat on the stool in front of him and said:

“Your duty is to find the place the kidnapped child. Your guys should walk door by door gathering the flowers. They know villages and gardens well.”

Hambaloghlu swallowed his saliva; it was the heaviest load!

“Agaoghlu, we are trying our best day and night. Sani” all apartments in Bayil, Kursumoghlu”s all properties and restoraunts kept our eyes on; my guys were tired of watching” and he added with hesitation: “We don”t know which one of them watch attentively. To watch Sani, or the Ravils, Sallaq or Yaniq?”

“That is, did they see until something suspected?” Khalis asked.

Rahib shook and opened his hands.

“No, Agaoghlu. If we want we can”t watch them everywhere. It is difficult. They moving like mercury. They don”t know what is to rest, whta is to sleep. Foe example, Sllaq, he is going and coming to Novkhani garden at least for a week, we don”t know what he is doing there”

“What he is really doing in winter time?” Mizi interefered, “It is very cold...”

“The same I think...He is doing nothing. Just walkinf around the garden two or threetimes, then coming back...”

"The garden belongs to Sallaq?" Mizi asked.

"I don't know exactly, cousin."

Rahib wanted to explain in details, but Kahlis asked:

"Forget Sallaq for a while. You know that Sani's places of concealment are less; they couldn't take the child far away. He must be either in the city or in the villages around us. Don't be late, you must find the child's place urgently. If Seyfal can't gather the amount our measure will be different. We must take the child from them by force. You still stay here and wait for Aga. We'll see what he says..."

Mizi asked:

"Shal I call Songulu?"

Khalis shook his head.

"No need! Tell him go home. Close his shops for some days, take his family to his safe house and wait there for some days. But now the most important person is water-carrier Piri, tell him to come in"

Mizi looked through the door at the yard, then stepped aside at once and let Piri come in. And Khalis also didn't like Piri but the hard situation made him to meet Piri. He welcomed him and showed him to take his seat.

Piri began to speak swallowing his saliva:

"Agaoghlu, I did as you said, I cut the gun, but the short gun is not useful; I tried to take it out of my coat, it

lasts too much time, I am afraid the Ravils will shoot me until I prepare my gun! Agaoghlu, please, find for me a pistol.

Khalis purposefully was kind.

"You are crazy, man! Your gun is your KRAZ, the big car tha you drive. You don't need other gun!"

Piri bewildered, it seemed that he didn't think about it. Khalis said decisively:

"My cousin, Sani will come to the village in his car ZIM, on 19, afternoon. You will stop your KRAZ in the corner of Jini Jani's street. You will tell that the car is out of order, can't move if someone asks; As soon as you see Sani's car you will drive your KRAZ directly to his car and squash his ZIL. Did you understand?"

Piri didn't expect the simple solution of this problem and that is why he looked at Agaoghlu amazingly.

"Yes, I understood. And I understopod that they are right saying that Agaoghlu is a very clever guy!"

He went out in a hurry.

"Mashallah!¹" Mizi said. "You are ready for everything!"

Then he asked like a businessman:

"Shal I call Shabali now?"

¹ Mashallah, is an Arabic phrase that means "God has willed it" and is used to express appreciation, joy, praise, or thankfulness for an event or person that was just mentioned. It is also a common expression used in the Muslim world to wish for God's protection of something or someone from the evil eye.

When Shabali came in Khalis smiled softly.

"Well, what does your brother want, Shabali kishi?"

The cook was a kind man and he answered shyly:

"Agaoghlu, my scoundrel brother lost our father"s house in Novkhani in the card game. The name of the person whom he lost to, is Sallaq. He is one of Sani"s hepl-mates. Before he agreed to change the house into money, all relatives gathered and collected the amount and gave to my brother to give it Sallaq. But at the end Sllaq didn"t keep his word and refused to return our garden-house back... "

"Where is your garden?"

"Yes, sure. Our grandfathers left it for us!"

Khalis didn"t listen to him anymore and ordered Mizi who got surprised.

"Call Hambaloghlu Rahib. I think I have found the place of the child!"

-XXXXVII-

After Isha¹ worship Malik ajdar went out to the yard. It was a good clear winter night. The sanctuary was as bright as day after the reconstruction of the lightning

¹ Isha prayer is open to difference of opinion among the scholars as to when its due time expires. It seems from the apparent meaning of the texts that there are two times for Isha prayer: the first is original time and ends by midnight ("Establish regular prayers at the sun"s decline till the darkness of the night" Al-Isra, 78). The second is the time of necessity and it ends by the rise of true dawn.

system. There was nobody in the house, but Shabali. He was busy in the kitchen. He didn't wait for Aga to sit down and brought tea and some sweets for him and put on the table.

He didn't wait for interrogation, and right began to inform Aga that Sayfal and Shiri went to sovkhos, Khalis and Mizi went to set, and Hambaloghlu Rahib went to Novkhani. Then he said that Shakil Qochu was sleeping in the next room, Sarraf and Bij Abdul was in the sanctuary. The cook didn't move, as if he was rolling on the same place. Aga smiled and praised him a little bit.

Mashallah? You are very attentive!"

Soon Seyfal came in and after greeting Aga sat down near the hot stove. He began to inform Aga:

"Sani's people came and took the money, but they haven't yet return back the child. They said to be wait."

Aga's bright face grew black.

"You think Sani will not keep his word?"

"You never know, Aga. It makes no difference, but we can't let him live, people like Sani must be killed. He is currently dealing with child abduction!"

Malikajdar hesitated.

"No, I can't afford to kill people"

But his voice was not sure.

"Well, Aga, what shall we do?"

"Go back to sovkhos, stay with Shiri until night."

It was a clear winter night. You can drive the car even without light. When they turned to asphalt street Mizi was keen on picking up speed. But he didn't get the desired speed from ZAP car and disappointed.

"It is not a car, it is just a bullock cart!" he grumbled.

In fact, Shabali was taking care of his ZAP, but it was impossible to enjoy this car. Mizi, of course, knew that why Khalis preferred this car.

Restaurant "Shabaka" was situated on the seashore and it was a good and comfortable object. All well-known people of the city usually enjoyed this restaurant. The employees of this restaurant served the clients very well and they tried to do their best to serve the clients well in the cabinets. There were four or five closed cabinets in the restaurant. They were for respectful guests.

It was interesting to look at well dancing girls in the restaurant till the dawn at least two times in a month. The restaurant was full of people. People who came to the restaurant entered by the invitation car under police control. It was Kursumoghlu's restaurant and it brought to him much money than the market of clothes.

The servants were running up and down in the yard of the restaurant with food. The arrival of guests didn't make Kursumoghlu glad. He took them to one of the

secret rooms behind the restaurant. Khalis didn't like his behaviour. He refused the food and tea offered him.

"You seem to change your mind?"

"Yes, Khalis Aga, I changed my mind" Kursumoghlu said and hid his shivering hands under the table.

"But a man, if he is a man of course, must keep his word! "

Kursumoghlu got angry and said:

"Well, it doesn't concern manhood, Agaoghlu! But it is just madness to change this stock of wealth to prison"

Khalis didn't know what to say to his unscrupulous. Mizi said ironically:

"You never put the paycheck over your honor, Shakil"

"Mizi cousin, yes, sure, but there are many things that coming above money. You know, killing a man is not as easy as it sounds. In short, it's none of my business to kill a man!"

Khalis cried at him:

"What? You say the rich people don't care about the honor?"

Kursumoghlu was offended and said:

"You hear me? Lines were crossed!"

Khalis stood up and said in a low voice:

"Sani's people kidnapped your uncle's son, and he wants one hundred fifty thousand instead. If Shiri doesn't give the amount he will kill the child! And then, you know how it is."

Kursumoghlu was shocked by the unexpected news. Khalis didn't wait for an answer and left the room.

When they moved away from the restaurant Khalis was sorry and said:

"One of the Sani's angel of death slipped off!"

Mizi said:

"He is just honorless person, not an angel of death!"

Khalis didn't agree.

"A snake that its tail twisted is very dangerous. You will see, he will change his mind again"

Mizi tried to calm him.

"You think two angels of death are not enough for Sani? I mean Jini Jani and Piri"

"Any big operation would be better to be insured by several places"

A white car with high speed passed by and stopped. Mizi stopped ZAP too. Kursumoghlu came up to ZAP in a hurry, he asked through the window of the car:

"Is it true that Sani kidnapped my only cousin?"

Khalis kept silent and Kursumoghlu grumbled with dissatisfaction:

"Sani ought not to do that! Never mind, I will teach him!"

"How will you do it?"

"Agaoghlu, january 19 is the day of important event. His birthday! Sani will be at the restaurant, all his helpmates will be there. After wedding they will come to restaurant...Agaoghly, it is my duty to kill him on that day!"

Khalis shook his hand and said:

"And I take it back completely what I said in the restaurant"

Kursumoghlu smiled and moved away.

Khalis saw his father alone in the house. He also informed his father about all that happened during the time. But he didn't understand his father either got pleased or not, instead he heard that his father sent Seyfal to sovkhos again.

Suddenly Rahib appeared in mud. He seemed to be frozen. He addressed to Khalis:

"They hid the child in Shabali's garden!"

"Is it true? You are not mistaken, I think?" Khalis asked.

"Exactly! I went to Novkhani with two my people and it was clear night. The car's lights were put out. From a distant we saw that there was light in the garden. We came up slowly by slowly and approached the garden. We observed for a long time. A man in the garden was alone. He was often coming in and going out of the

house. When he was left for lavatory I crossed the fence and came up the lightning window of the house. I saw a child motionless on the bed with tied hands and legs, I returned back immediately. And I aske one of my guys to remain there and came back. What should we do?"

Malikajdar thought a little bit and then offered a useless sugestion:

"I think, maybe we take the child from that man and return back to his family, my son?"

"It is impossible, Dad!" Khalis said without thinking."We can scare away Sani. And traps that we organized will be meaningless"

"But they may kill the child!"

"No, they won"! They needed money and they got it. They will return back the child." Then he turned to Rahib and ordered:

"It is cold. You change the guards, but watch attentively the garden! Right now, drive the car directly to Novkhani, the child"s life is in your hands! And tell Sarraf and Bij Abdul to come here. Let Mizi go to rest, it is too late..."

Khalis tried to calm his father who was sad.

"My father, it is not your fault. Sani crossed the red line! We must stop him forever! Would you mind to send Sarraf and Bij Abdul to wedding party?"

Malikajdar kept silent. He went out of the house without saying good-bye. Khalis said to Sarraf and Bij Abdul who came in later:

"Tomorrow you will go to wedding insteda of Aga. Give money for the wedding, have a dinner, listen to musicians and wait. Jani will organize a separate dining room for Sani and the Ravils. When you see that wedding bubbling with excitement, you enter the room and kill them."

Bij Abdul asked:

"Agaoghlu, must we kill all of them?"

"We have no any choice! Sani's bodyguards are armed. If you don't kill them, they will kill you! Mizi will wait for you in the car and take you to the old hut. You will rest there for some days. Don't worry, the hut is comfortable"

Bij Abdul asked again:

"What will we say to our family?"

Khalis answered without thinking:

"You will tell tomorrow that Hatam and Adam robbed the shop again and Aga send you to rayon for three or more days. For forage. I think it is not so bad reason!"

"Right! It is ok!" Sarraf confirmed.

"Now, you go home and rest!"

When Sani went to the city he came back each time with new addresses and the Ravils who were waiting for him impatiently were very glad to meet him. They lived and enjoyed the life as well as in prison. After a brief training session Sani sent them to the mentioned addresses. All operations went well.

The addresses were selected specially. No one could protest because of fear of Sani. They paid to him without any word. They didn't use the phone. It was Khasi's instruction. First Sallaq used to go to the mentioned address. His appearance was funny. He used to give messages, fix the deadline and come back. His job is all like that. Next day Yaniq used to go to the mentioned address to know about the result. After that at the mentioned time well dressed Asta Ravil appeared in the address and he was followed by Takhta Ravil. He was also well dressed. Asta accepted the ready amount and wrote the check: "The amount given by a person.... accepted for the Garabagh Freedom Foundation".

Of course, it was not always easy to get money. Sometimes they met the people who tried not to obey. Once a high rank official worked in the ministry refused to pay to Sani. He was strong person and lived alone. He was unmarried. And he lived honestly.

He was not keen on his intimate relations, but sometimes he asked his driver to organize for him a woman like street walker to spend the night. When he listened to Sallaq who came in his cabinet, he smiled and said:

“I am an honest person living off my salary. You opened the wrong door and your friends who sent you to me are mistaken. The demanded amount doesn’t concern me”. The he insistingly reproached the guest:

“You won’t deal with this business in this hard period of our country. Garabagh is holding out our hands. But you undertake to do everything and collect money”

Sani didn’t send Yaniq to that address anymore. But ho took the Ravils and went to his house himself and at midnight the high rank official woke up and got excited. How they could enter his house that was under police control?

Anyhow he insisted on that he had nothing to pay them. Asta took the hammer and banged on the wall of his bed-room slowly and found the secret place where he kept his money and brilliants. There were too much amount and gold. Takhta opened his bag and they filled it, but the official said again:

“They don’t concern me!”

“Well. If you don’t mind we will giv it to the Support Foundation for Garabagh!” Sani said and pushed into his palm the written check.

Right after those operations Asta was howling with laughter.

“How good of you to make paycheck up!”

Sani kept silence indifferently. He wouldn't let the Ravils near himself, but he knew exactly that their eyes have been opened rather. They knew much more.

Takhta always wanted to know the matter deeply.

“What about our share of that money? Probably we will have some of them?”

The Ravils understood that Sani didn't make up that kind of great game like show. There's someone behind the scenes.

“Not a single coin belongs to us!” Sanka said.

“Then we shall simply go in the smoke. And we're just playing around” Asta said.

Sani calmed them.

“Bur they promised to give us the whole amount of two or three operations. These are petty and small shares. Main shares are in the fishery and caviar. If we can take it under control...”

The Ravils knew about this operation. Sata said in hesitation:

“You think Vasili can make the Seyyids to get out the sea?”

Sani smiled:

“So, it’s already happened for them. The Seyyids can’t fish for two weeks. Malikajdar is ill, and it is time to press them”

Asta said carefully:

“Brother, his small son... They say that little guy is frisky! His name is Khalis I think...”

“Don’t exaggerate, it’s not his job! Except Malikajdar no one can stop us when we’re so high... Vasili is just coming here...” Sani assured them.

Vasili arrived, but he came with the bad news. Sani got very angry. His boat, a nice boat with high speed, had drowned. He swore at Vasili until he was tired. Then he saw that young guy was in a hopeless situation pitifully, later he relented; he said softly a little bit:

“When I assigned you this operation I said to you to be careful...”

Vasili’s nickname was “Seriya”, he always dressed well, and he was the author of several murders. He was ready to kill every one who hurt him. He scared of Sani only.

When he answered he grumbled:

“My brother, I never thought that they would do it! How they reach to Dambay! How they found our boat! How they destroyed it! I don’t understand! Perhaps, their men do a good job!”

"I told that the Seyyids are calm externally, but in fact they are like nuts, to break them is very difficult. But you, Seriy, is a blue guy!" He insulted the young boy.

Sani told him his childhood mistakes and the Ravils were laughing.

Vasili muttered:

"Brother, we also damaged them! More or less!" and he glanced at the Ravils with hate.

At last Sani said:

"Well, how are our fisher-men?"

"What do you expect from people who swam in the frozen water? They are half-men! They must go to hospital and be recovered for a long time! Pity for them!"

"Why they didn't see the damage of the boat?"

"I asked them. They have noticed the damage after crossing Sariqaya, but it was too late. It is good that the ship from Oil Rocks met them and saved them..."

Asta Ravil joined the conversation.

"Brother, what do you say? Is it time to punish the Seyyids?"

Sani thought a little bit, then said:

"After wedding party of the Janis we'll do it! First, we need to cut their strong hands!"

Asta asked for clearance:

"Most probably, you mean Sarraf and Buj Abdul?"

Sani shook his head. Takhta smiled slyly, said:

"Batka, you finally came to my opinion!"

-XXXXXX-

The young, pregnant woman Samaya hurried to welcome Hatam. The midwife who watched her step by step uttered:

“You, khanum, don’t run! You may fall down!”

Mariya Topal who could already manage wheelchair bought for her by Hatam said from the balcony:

“Hey, my child, be careful! You may hurt the baby!”

Samaya didn’t get embarrassed running to Hatam and clasping in his arms. She complained to him showing coyness:

“Agaoghlu, I am bored of these old women! They are chattering all days bad thiongs! Turn out of the house both of them!”

Hatam sleeked down her hair, said:

“No, you will follow their advice untill you are freed...” Then he came up to midwife and asked:

“How long will it last?”

“If fortune favour she’ll give birth in two or three days....”

Hatam turned back.

“Brother, come here!”

Samaya just saw a man who stood behind the door and wanted to move away shyly, but Hatam stopped her.

“He is my brother! If I am busy Adam will take care of you!”

Cold winter sun went down a long time ago; seven-eight people entered the house.

Seyfal who returned back home at dawn didn't sleep at all. They took back the child who was kidnapped by Sani's people.

The people who came to the sanctuary with Hatam were placed in the house by the order of Aga. He asked Shabali to feed them. It was not so difficult for Shabali to feed them, but he was anxious. Perhaps the armed guests feared him. Seyfal smiled ironically, he got out to the balcony together with Hatam.

Khalis sent Sarraf and Bij Abdul to wedding Party, then he stayed alone, but he was worried, strolled about the verandah. When he saw his elder brother he hurried to welcome him and embraced him. He didn't look at his brother Hatam seriously who kept armed group around himself.

"You are the herald of Freedom of our village!" Khalis laughed and Seyfal continued:

"What happened to Meydan? Gone away?"

"No! Meydan is just boiling!"

Khalis asked with interest:

"Who are they you took to house?"

Hatam answered unwillingly:

They are heads of self-defence units!"

"What is your goal to take them here? Or maybe the sanctuary is going to be attacked?" He joked.

Hatam didn't pay attention to joke and said:

"We were going to the city, to the head office, I desided to visit to my young brother! How thing are going on? My friends also wanted to visit to you!"

"Brother, are they responsible to you?"

"Just theoretically!"

"But in fact..."

"In fact, we have weak subordination system in our movement"

"Then, you say, it is anarchy!"

Hatam agreed.

"Yes, we can call it anarchy..." he moved away and added:"Let me go and meet my Aga! How is he?"

"Don't go! He's locked himself away in his flat. Won't see anyone." Khalis stopped him, then aske in anxious:

"Do you know the army gets to the city?"

"Yes, we know"

"General warned us that in two days the army will enter the city. They will scatter the meetings"

"We have the exact information. The army will enter this night! Don't you hear the voice of aircrafts?"

"And..."

"And that is why we go to Staff to do something."

"You think you have to assemble to meet the advance of the Red Army along the streets?"

"Yes, brother. We have occupied all streets and roads coming to city"

Khalis said ironically:

"How you closed the roads?"

"By buses, tractors, big cars. We establish barricades."

Khalis was pity for his elder brother.

"Don't be offended, brother, it is nonsense. How you stand with busses in front of tanks and cannons!"

Hatam said with simple-heartedness:

"You think they will drive tanks directly to the unarmed people? Can they shoot at people?"

"Things could be much worse. Yes, it could be worse!"

"But, at this point, there is no turning back. We can't go back! Azerbaijani people united like a fist! No power can destroy it!"

Sayfal said hopelessly:

"It is strange! Never happened in the history! Azerbaijani never unite with Azerbaijani!" And he advised Hatam:

"Hatam Aga, lay low, don't go ahead! Things do happen in life! They may leave you and run away! You may see that you remained alone!"

"Don't take me aside my way, my cousin! If I am alone I will never go back!"

Seyfal said:

"Hatam Aga. You ought to use your skill for the sake of sanctuary!"

“Our sanctuary is Azerbaijan!” Then he looked through the window and saw his friends were waiting for him in the yard.

“Brother, I have something to tell you. Don’t be offended, my cousin Seyfal, it doesn’t concern you.” Then he turned to Khalis.

Seyfal stepped aside, watched the brothers from a distant. He didn’t hear what Hatam whispered to Khalis. But he noticed Khalis face getting white and and anxious. He was very surprised. Hatam embarrassed his little brother and said loudly:

“Brother Adam knows about it, if I shall be killed, you please, take care of that. I hope you will do it...”

-XXXXXXII-

Maghar¹ was crowded with people and wedding party boiled slowly by slowly. The musicians were playing willingly, little children were dancing and without stopping. Then the youngest people of the village should have to join the party. One of the youngest singer with the permission of his master sang some songs, the he put aside his tambourine, kept silent because no one listened to him. He started to have a tea.

¹ marguee or maghar - a large tent put up for a wedding or a mourning ceremony

The dining tent was a little bit far away/ There were too much foods on the tables, admired by guests. Jani was walking up and down between two tents and watching and welcoming carefully the guests. He sometimes ordered his assistants to serve or take care of guests well.

There was another small tent under the trees a little bit far away from the two maghars. The small tent decorated specially, carpets covered the ground, tables were full of different tasteful cold foods. Jani came up to his elder son who was standing near the small tent.

“Don’t step aside the tent! Don’t let the children enter the tent. You know, my son...”

“I know, Dad... But I am tired of waiting for that honorless person! It is five o’clock, but he hasn’t come yet!”

“They will come, don’t worry” Jani assured his son.

At that time, two well-dressed men appeared in the boiling yard. One of them was Sarraf, the other one was Bij Abdul. Jini Jani hurried up to the guests and welcomed them. Bij Abdul said:

“Aga felt himself not so well, he sent us...”

Jani was pleased and said:

“Thank you very much. Thank God, you’ve come. I am very happy for your coming”

“Congratulations!” Sarraf said.

"Let your singles be married! Please, this way! To the dining tent!"

"Oh, why not? A good idea!" said Bij Abdul smiling slyly. "After dinner we would like to listen to music."

But Jini Jani was not a child and he knew well that the guests came to put an end to Sani not for the music. Jani felt himself a little bit easy and looked at his former enemies with love.

"I knew that Aga is a faithful partner. He won't leave me in trouble." he said.

Sarraf and Bij Abdul entered the dining tent silently.

The water-carrier Piri's car with ten tones water stopped on the corner of the street not far from Jani's yard for an hour. The driver either leaned to the under of that ugly KRAZ, or get out of there grumbling loudly. He couldn't find out where was problem with the car. The unemployed people who gathered around him advised different things.

That was noteced by Jani who sometimes got out of the yard and looked round. He asked one of the teenages:

"Go there, look, what is the problem? Why they closed the road? It is Sani's coming time!"

The teenage came back quickly, he said to Jani:

"Piri's car! It's just that for now the car won't start. He says, let Jani won't be worried, I will empty the road soon.

I beseech Sani!"

Jini Jani got pleased of this answer and ordered the teenage.

"Ok, you go and help waiters!"

But the teenage didn't go. He asked Jani:

"They say, Sani tattooed on Piri's forehead the word 'bitch' in prison. Is it true?"

This question reminded him the past days, Jani was shocked for a while and right now understood the reason of why the car was messed up!

-XXXXXXXIII-

Asta Ravil just shaved and put on feeling hurt. He looked round through the opened door of Anush. He didn't like the old woman's state of mood and saw that here mouth opening and closing silently. But he didn't pay attention to that and closed her door indifferently.

Yesterday he felt himself bad when they moved away from the kindergarten. On the road they stopped the car, Yaniq got out of the car. He had to phone to sovkhos director from the telephone booth. At that time Asta began to nauseate and he asked Sani if he could go back.

He couldn't forgive himself for kidnapping. And he felt that this criminal wouldn't pass by silently, the punishment would come soon. In fact he didn't feel

satisfaction of this kind of life anymore. If he was not afraid of Sani he would go out of game long ago.

Takhta Ravil appeared afternoon. He was in good fig. His namesake asked:

“How was the operation? Any problem?”

“Oh, not so bad. Hey, guy, you are shining like a new coin! But yesterday you were bad!”

Asta grumbled:

“Yes, I felt awfully bad yesterday. By body hurt me. I took a taxi and hardly came back home. I thought i was my end. I took any kind of medicine what I found – aspirin, demidrol... I went to bed and got asleep until the morning.

When I woke up I saw that I bathed in sweat; so I changed my clothes and again was asleep. I woke up in the midday.”

“How are you now?”

“I am well a little bit. But I don”t know if I go to wedding or not?” he said unwillingly.

“We must go to wedding. You know that doesn”t go to people without us. Let me change my clothes and go out!”

Asta watched his namesake”s washing, he asked:

“Where you were for a long time?”

“In fact, our deal was not right from the beginning.”

“Why? Everything had been provided for the operation in advance. We had prepared it within several days...”

"Yes, we had...But we forgot the nature. The weather was bad. No one expected that the sea would be wavy, yavaoghlu"s shelter would be under water. What a pity! That shelter destroyed.'

"Did Sani get angry?"

"Yes! He was mad. First he wanted to take the child to Qobu, but soon he changed his mind. He said police could stop us in Khirdalan post. It was midnight, we couldn"t know what to do. At that time I remebered that Sallaq has a garden whish was lost in the game. I told him to take the child to that garden. Safe house! Sani agreed."

"And then?"

"Then we drove directly Sallaq"s house, took him and went to Novkhani. On the road Sallaq couldn"t find the direction to the house as it was dark.'

He tried to show his body where seen bruises.

"It is the child, son of bitch! He kicked me by foot! We hardly kept him. Yaniq took his hands, but I took his legs."

"Din"t you take chloroform?"

"We did. But it affected late!"

"How is the garden?"

"It is good. But the roads are bad."

"Did you take ZIM?"

"No, we were in a black VOLQA-24"

"Who was driving?"

"A russian drifter guy. He was in a soldier uniform. He said he was in prison recently. He got out of jail some days ago."

"How he found that russian guy?"

"He was Vasilli"s helpmate."

Takhta put on his dresses and continued:

"To speak frankly, I don"t understand Sani. He is a little bit magician; You need car? It is ready! You need people? It is ready! You need gun? Yes, here it is!"

Asta interrupted him:

"Come just to the point! So you found the garden at last... then?"

"Yes, it was difficult, but we found it. So we left Sallaq and the child there and came back to city. It was too late. Russian guy went away when we got out of the car and went to Yaniq"s house. I slept until ten o"clock and when I woke up in the morning Sani was not at home. He said that we had to be in Bayil. Perhaps he would come to take us."

"Where did he go?"

"He took Yaniq"s little daughter outside. He can use any chance to enjoy the life!"

Asta was pleased.

"This Yaniq is a very honorless person!"

"Yes, he is a procurer! It is sin even to shake his hand!"

There was a signal downstairs.

Takhta looked through the window and watching ZIM in the yard hurried.

"Be quick, or Sani will give us a good wiggling" he said.

When Asta went to the door Takhta added: "Wait, let me tell the old woman shut the door behind us" and he entered Anush's room, delayed a little bit there, then got out of the room and said loudly:

"Aunt Anush, we're going, close the door!"

Takhta muttered under his breath.

Asta:

"Who are you fooling around?"

"Did you know?"

Asta moved his head:

"Yes, of course. When I dressed she was dead"

"Oh, if we tell Sani he will kill us!"

"You think, no need to inform Sani?"

Takhta smiled.

"What will happen to the dead woman? We will eat and enjoy at the Kursumoghlu's restaurant, celebrate Sani's birthday. You know Kursumoghlu will invite all dancers and we will go on the racket there, and then, come back and bury the old woman. After yesterday's hard and awful ache we should rest a little bit, shouldn't we?"

Asta hesitated.

"If Sanka will know...." And he didn't finish.

"If you keep silent I also will be silent...He will not know... if we wouldn't say...Remember, Sani will never erect a monument to you, or to me...If he gets into trouble he will betray us".

Asta had to agree with him.

-XXXXXX1V-

Sani took a seat ahead. Takhta took place behind the wheel of the car. He was a good driver and drove ZIM well. Asta Ravil was more nourished after prison and sprawled on the seat. Yaniq was silent and pressed himself close to the corner of the spacious saloon of the car. Sani not showing his face to back, asked:

"Who came to take the child?"

"His father" Yanig answered.

"It was 12 at midnight, and Sallag brought the child from Novkhani"

"Did you count the money they gave? How much?"

"One hundred fifty thousand saharply! As we agreed".

Sani smiled bitterly.

"All rich men are the same.

This low fellow has a lot of money, but he is throwing himself into the fire..."

Yaniq said:

“Sani, my brother, people who have money will never do that. They say Shiri went to a place for pilgrimage...”

Sani turned to him with astonishment:

“You mean, that is Malikajdar who gave to him money?”

“Why not?”

Sani thought for a while, said:

“Yes, maybe, unfortunately”.

-XXXXXXXV-

Furied Sani tempered a little bit. He saw that water-carrier Piri hadn't yet move the car from the corner, got into a wax. He wanted to call that teenage.

Seyfal and Bij Abdul have chosen such a pretty place the road that led up to Sani's yard seen well. They didn't show interest the car that stayed on the corner of the street. They waited for the black ZIM.

Mizi stopped the car near the gate of Sani and waited for Sarraf and Bij Abdul who were at the wedding party. They watched water-carrier Piri's clownery.

At last the expected car appeared in the street by six o'clock. It turned towards furied Sani's block and approached the corner. Piri who stared at the road came out of the car immediately and wiping up his hands got in KRAZ, and turned on the key. The car didn't work as always, the starter squawked like a hen, but motor didn't work. Piri sweated with fear.

Sarraf and Abdul stopped eating when the ZIM appeared on the corner of the street.

Takhta gave a signal when he reached the water-carrier car that blocked the way. KRAZ didn't move. Sani was displeased and turned to Asta;

"Go and know why they barred the way?"

Though Asta was fat he moved quickly. He threw himself out of car and hurried to the water-carrier car angrily. Takhta also got off the car, said to Sani:

"Would be better me go there too, Asta is a dunderhead, he can make unpleasantness".

Water-carrier Piri seeing Sani's cut-throats who hurried up to him, lost his head, tried to turn on the motor two or three times, but the starter didn't work. As the brake was released the heavy car moved on and slowly went to the direction of the ZIM.

Sarraaf and Abdul didn't figure out what happened, but they looked at each other and stood up. They went out of the Sani's yard and hurried to the direction of the edge of street.

Yanig kept his eyes on the Ravils and took the gun out of his bosom. He pressed the barrel of the gun against the front seat of the car. When he wanted to shoot there was metallic sound coming from around.

Asta jumped to the stairs of the KRAZ on the right side, and the same did Takhta, but on the left side. The heavy car was moving. They were angry, and Takhta caught Piri by the throat through the opened window.

"Stop the car, rascal! Are you blind?"

"The brake is not working, brother!" said Piri.

"You clumsy oaf!" Takhta recognised Piri and he took more firmly by his throat. "You want to kill us?"

Sani didn't pay attention to all these, he was only interested in the sound that came behind, he turned back.

"Yanig, what's that noise?" he asked.

“It is a gun, brother!”

“You going to shoot me with your own gun?” Sani smiled.

Yanig smiled at him too.

“Yes, I have this idea....” and he pulled the trigger and shot him.

Piri held the collar of Takhta who wanted to choke him and released the brake and wheel. KRAZ suddenly started to work and with high speed went down the street, and struck against the ZIM. It was dragged along the street a little bit. When it leaned the ZIM against the fence, its front wheels squashed the ZIM like fruit, and then lost its balance turned over. Water barrel opened watering all the street.

Sarraf and Abdul not paying any attention to their new shoes filled with water, reached the mashed ZIM, making their guns ready, looked through the window of the car.

Tahkta was under the KRAZ turned over, and died immediately without any noise. Asta fell to the ground and his head hit the stone and he also died at once because of his heaviness. Piri was alive and got a light trauma.

The sound of the military aircrafts landed and flied for the whole week, cut out suddenly. Flights were stopped too. There was a long and dead silence over Absheron, the village and the quarry.

In fact, Black January, written in history with blood and known as Black Saturday, that was a violent crackdown on a civilian population, started on 19 January evening.

The End