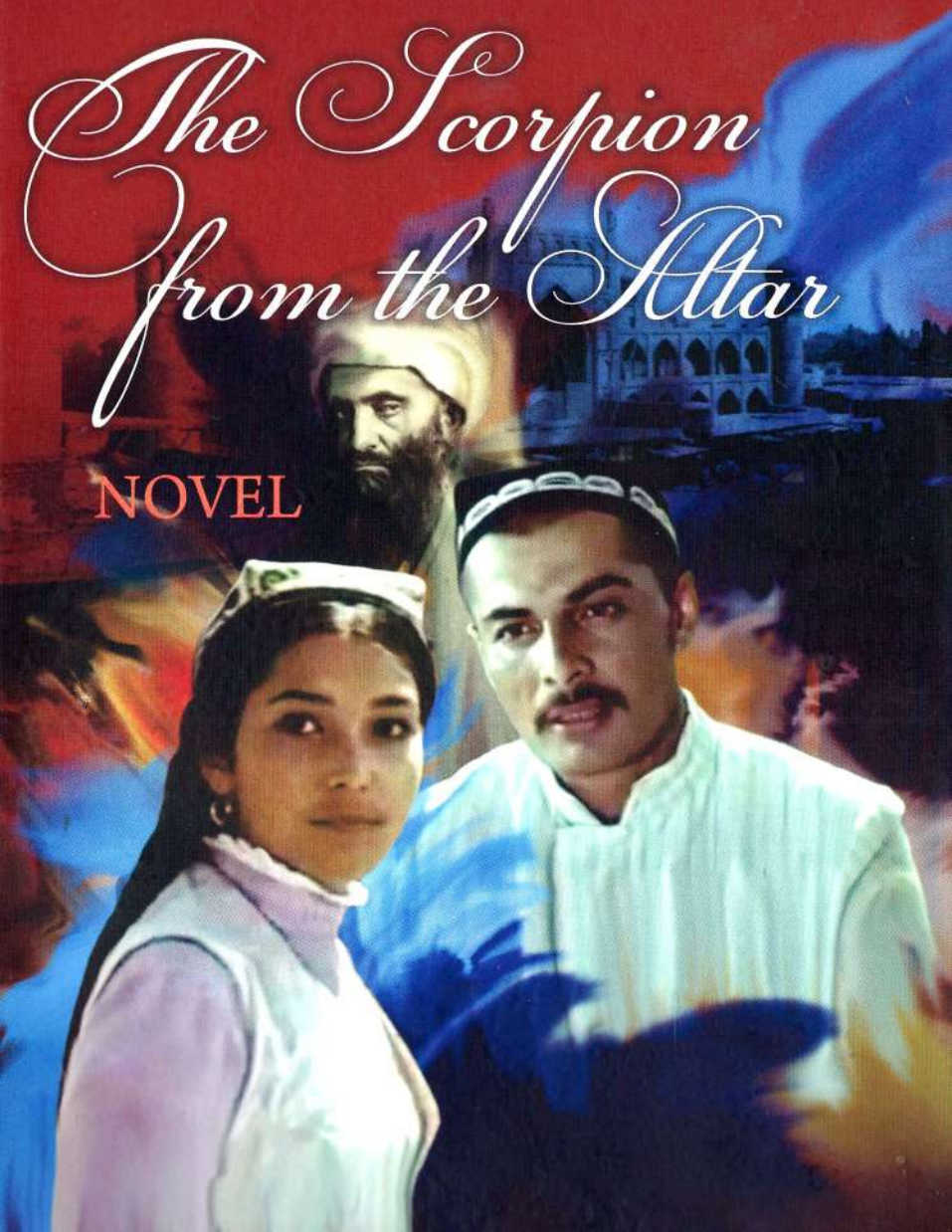


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ABDULLA
QODIRIY

*The Scorpion
from the Altar*

NOVEL



ABDULLA
QODIRIY

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The Scorpion from the Altar: Novel.

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“The Scorpion from the Altar” is an historical novel by Abdulla Qodiriy. The novel highlights the lives of Khudoyar Khan, the ruler of the Kokand Khanate and munshiys (secretaries in khan’s palace). The book also tells about the unfair policy by the khan and his people, the unbearable life of ordinary people.

The main characters of the novel are Rano and Mirza Anvar, but the followings also are of utmost importance in the novel:

Negative characters: Solikh Mahdum (Rano’s father), Abdurahmon, Shahodat muftiy, Hurramshokh. They serve to show the real faces of misguided intelligence of those times.

Positive characters: Sultonali Mirzo, Safar buzchi, Muhammad Rajabbek, Kobil and etc. These characters are excellent examples of the ordinary people and the government representatives who can perfectly describe the dignity and sincerity of the entire Uzbek nation.

Translators:

I.M. Tukhtasinov, U.R. Yoldoshev, A.A. Khamidov

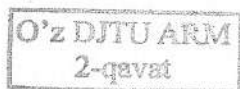
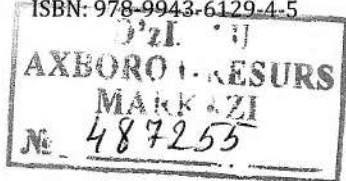
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FOREWORD

Republic of Uzbekistan is considered a cradle for lots of famous and outstanding scholars and people such as Abu Rayhan Beruniy, Abu ali ibn Sino (Avicenna), Al-Farobiy, Amir Temur (Tamerlane), Mir Alisher Navoiy, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, Muhammad Amin Hoja Muqimiy, Abdulla Qodiriy and others.

It is well-known that the entire Uzbek literature was usually translated into English through the Russian language.

Becoming independent and promoting the integration of its culture into the world community the Republic of Uzbekistan needs more and more the Uzbek translators with the knowledge of foreign languages. Besides, nowadays huge opportunities have been created for the direct translation from Uzbek into foreign languages, particularly into the English language.

The development of direct translation from Uzbek into foreign languages especially into English was specified in a number of Decrees and Orders of the President. We think that the book in your hands will give you an opportunity to get acquainted with the history of traditions and customs, life style, the way of thinking and outlook of the Uzbek people as well.

The main purpose is to introduce the precious works of Uzbek literature to the English speaking countries.

Abdulla Qodiriy (April 10, 1894 – October 4, 1938) was one of the famous Uzbek poets, translators and writers. Qodiriy was one of the most recognized Uzbek writers of

the 20th century. He introduced realism to the Uzbek literature with his historical novels. His most famous works are the historical novels "The Days Gone By" (1922) and "The Scorpion from the Altar" (1929). "The Scorpion from the Altar" is the first full-length novel written by this prominent Uzbek writer.

We express our gratitude towards the teachers of higher educational institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan for their help in translation of this book. We look forward to the readers' comments concerning the quality of the translation. We will appreciate it if you contact us and share with your opinion at: ilhom_tuhtasinov@mail.ru

Group of the translators

About Content of Novel

The last ruler of the Kokand Khanate Khudoyar Khan included his insatiable passions sacrificed for the sake of his interests meet his subjects, especially the poor farmers and artisans. According to this, women and girls of the country became slaves of the harem Khan, and those who tried to oppose it, ruthlessly were punished. Here it is the content of my novel.

This is a small possibility within the book to describe here the mainstay Khudoyar's ulamos¹ edge higher clergy, their public and private life, family life and madrasahs, their immorality, heartlessness, extreme inhumanity. These are the negative characters of my novel.

And the poor, the workers and their families, their life-style, their behaviors, and their relationships were opposed to the above-mentioned negative characters in the novel.

Describing goodies novel, of course, I tried to portray them as they were exaggerating and not sinning against the historical truth. Their attitude to the Khan and his servants, their protest against the Khan's cruelty was, of course, political. To show this otherwise would exaggerate events to be untrue and dropped with the dignity of the book. Contradictions of two classes cracked between the ruling and oppressed, I would draw a picture of life then give historical and ethnographic signs of the times, while showing the Khan's harem, the Khan's wives and slaves, the life of Uzbeks peculiar humor, the propensity for satire, that talented Uzbek women, their ability to express their feelings

¹ *Ulam*o – learned men of Islam

and matching thoughts and wits. Also, in the novel there are many other things that do not need to be announced in advance. All this and so will not escape the reader's attention.

*If Farhad was proud of his Shirin,
Majnun was beauty of Layli.
I 'm proud of that flower Rano
she is all the colors of the earth.*
(Mirza)

*Kays's madness for Layli was misfortune and shaming.
I am proud of you because Mirza is all of desiring!*
(Rano).

RANO'S OWNER

Today Solikh Mahdum was more revealed than usual. Having got out of the mosque he went straight to the butcher and bought some meat for one coin and some onions for 8 sums, and so he returned home. He asked two boys who were practicing their handwriting at the school to sweep and water the yard and he himself entered his house.

Nigoroyim was feeding her junior baby with her breast and had already let her girls go. Rano was playing the clay game with her two brothers and she did not notice that her hair was touching the mess.

Solikh Mahdum saw Rano:

– Atta girl, Rano, good for you, what a mess! – Said Mahdum, – you are supposed to wear only linen dress, not atlas²² one! You are not worth the atlas dress!

Rano stood up and hid her messy hands behind herself being embarrassed from her father.

– Aren't you embarrassed of what you are doing now? Wash you hands, go and wash your hands! Your brothers are too young but it is not good for you, you are not a child any more!

Rano ran towards the ditch and Nigoroyim smiled saying "What a crazy girl?!". Solikh Mahdum was still angry with Rano and talking about her:

– If you don't have anything to do read a book, practice your handwriting, you are not potter's daughter...

2 ² Atlas – Uzbek national rade silk smooth shiny fabric

Solikh Mahdum went to the terrace having put meat next to Nigoroyim.

Nigoroyim did not like Mahdum's words said towards Rano. But the matter which was in her mind now was the fact that Mahdum would get really angry to hear about spending a large amount of money. For sure, there was always meat provided to Nigoroyim's kitchen. It was supplied by her husband. Maximum what could Mahdum bring was only a kilogram. This also would be brought if there was normal "freedom" by children or if he could get more than he expected from the Thursday".

That's why Nigoroyim could not pay back this good deed by her husband:

- You have brought more meat today, haven't you? Did Anvar ask you? - she asked.

- No, - Mahdum replied putting his salla on to the peg, - Cook manti³³ today, - he said, - It has been a long time ago when we last had manti...

Rano came back having washed herself. She just had a look at her father and then sat beside her mother and kissed the baby's hands, expressing her love towards the baby who was being fed by her mother.

Solikh Mahdum came up to Nigoroyim with great anger.

- You are not a baby any more, Rano, - said Mahdum, - What will people say if they notice what you have been doing with your brothers today? Inshaallah you are about to get married soon. Now you must think what you are doing, my dear!

Rano stared at her mother with embarrassment, and again she carried on kissing baby's hands.

- I guess Rano will not get serious till she gets married, - said Nigoroyim.

Having got embarrassed from these words Rano put her head onto the chest of the baby. And Solikh Mahdum

³ *Manti* - Oriental dumplings

ran towards the corridor smiling and started to put on his shoes.

– Stand up, Rano! – he said from the corridor and added: Bring the meat to your mother and help her to peel onions! Anvar also is about to come very soon, and the meal should be ready this evening!

Rano raised her head up when her father went out and looked at her mother with little sadness. She was not angry with her mother's previous words, on the contrary, she was happy to hear them. Honestly, the talk which has just taken place between her parents was symbol of her near future. Although her mother Nigoroyim had said the phrase "until she gets married" a little bit cruel Rano knew whom she was going to get married and she liked him very much so she was very happy to hear those words from her mother.

And her father's words "Anvar is also about to come back and the meal must be ready this evening!" were kind of a mirror for her and she was very pleased of it...

2

AMIR UMARKHON'S HOUSEMAID

Solikh Mahdum was "teacher at school" during 1230-1290 of Hijra. According to his classification Solikh Mahdum came from an educated family. His grandfather was a mufti, and religious judge at Olimkhan and Umarkhan's palaces and his father used to be a teacher at Muhammadalikhan's madrassah for many years. In short Mahdum's ancestors were honored and appreciated people who used to work at the Khan's palaces. But his dignity and honor did not reach Mahdum because Muhammadalikhan was executed. It happened like this:

People who are aware of the history of the Turkistan Khanate know very well that at the end of Amir Umar-

khan's life he fell in love with a housemaid who used to serve at his palace. As the housemaid was very young he had to wait till she was old enough to get married to him. And this very moment Umarkhan died not marrying her. And his son Madalikhan (Muhammalikhan) became a Khan. Several years later that girl was old enough to get married and she became so beautiful and attractive that even Madalikhan fell in love with her. Even though Madalikhan used to see her every day at his palace, according to the data of history, he suffered with her love for a long time. Because educated people at his palace did not want him to get married to this girl as they used to think that she was like mother to him:

"Even if your father did not get married to her, at first he had decided to do so when she would be old enough. And so this girl is like your mother and the Shariah will not allow you to get married to her!"

After these words Madalikhan had to give up his hope but consequently he started to fire the educated men and appoint new ones to replace them. When he settled the problem with his men he faced the new people once more wondering about their ideas and as it is known, the new appointed people were very happy of the fact that they were serving the palace, so they did not want the khan to be angry with them and they explained:

"Actually it would be very acceptable. Your father said that he would get married to her but he did not say that he had got married to her. So if your honesty gets married to her it would be all right." And they gave him permission with several stamps. And very soon Madalikhan got married to her celebrating a great approval party...

Thanks to some people the Emir of Bukhara Bakhodir (Botur) was known to be also secretly in love with this girl. But he did not know how to get married to her. And he decided to think up a plan or a trick all the time then. And

one day he heard about Madalikhan's getting married to her. So he got very angry and called all the educated men and muftis and other such kind of people to his palace and asked them to give him permission in a great anger. And those people were very scared of him and they wrote the following:

"In every situation and place the most important thing is the law of Islam. And everybody must obey it including the Khans. If the khan tries to avoid or break the laws of Islam in that case, he is not Muslim any more and he will be an apostate. So the present Khan of Turkistan and Fergana, Muhammadalikhan, got married to his father's wife that is his mother. And he became an apostate with such kind of action. For which he must be executed!"

But Emir Bakhodirhan pretended as if he did not pay much attention to this rule and gathered his troops and went to Fergana saying that it was kind of an action which was going to be a great service for the religion. The Turkistan Khanate showed a great opposition to Emir Bakhodir's troops. Many people died from both sides but we do not care about it. The important point of this argument is that in the end Madalikhan was injured and he was executed by Bakhodir Khan. Some of the educated men who gave the permission to Madalikhan were fired and some of them were able to escape. Emir Bakhodir Khan appointed his man to the throne of Fergana and took the housemaid with him to Bukhara.

The important point is that, one of the educated men among those who gave permission to Madalikhan and was fired, was Solikh Mahdum's father. His father could not live long after being fired and so the honor of this family also ended, because all the Khans who were appointed to the throne of Turkistan were people loyal to Bukhara Emir. And those who gave permission to Madalikhan became dishonored and they were eliminated.

MAHDUM'S MARRIAGE AND HIS WORK AS A TEACHER AT SCHOOL

Solikh Mahdum was a twenty years old student when his father died. After his father's death his elder brother move to Margilan and became Imam there. Solikh Mahdum stayed in Kokand with his mother and his sixteen year old sister. This family got into many troubles because they did not have income, so Solikh Mahdum had to leave his education and find work.

For sure Solikh Mahdum was not able to manage a serious work. And he could not become an Imam as he did not have beard. He had come across many difficulties but in the end with the help of his relatives and neighbors he managed to open a school at his house. He was able to gather some children from his makhalla⁴. And so he became the teacher.

His work did not succeed for a few years. The quantity of students was not more than 20. And the "Thursday-ship" was barely enough for daily food. As Mahdum's family still did not have any incomes except this one, they had to be satisfied with this amount of money. As soon as a son was twenty and a daughter was fifteen years old, mothers always started thinking about their children's marriage. And Mahdum's mother had such kind of sickness was like kicking a dead body: Mahdum was more than 20 years old and his sister was 28, so they both were supposed to get married. Their mother did not care about Naima as she was both beautiful and clever, she would at least get married to an assistant of a teacher or a son of bek.

But Mahdum's issue was more difficult: you know about his income and he only had a shabby house inherited from his father. So Mohlaroyim decided to engage Mahdum with

⁴ *Makhalla* – a self governing institution of people

someone before she died. Otherwise after her death he would never be able to get married on his own. She wanted to engage Naima with someone and then to find somebody for Mahdum from that family. In order to find an appropriate family with good manner which had both a son and a daughter Mohlaroyim spent almost two years. So three years later Mohlaroyim was able to find a family which met her requirements.

There was a son who used to study at the madrassah and sixteen years old daughter in Mirza's family at Khan's palace. The family accepted Mohlaroyim's offer with great pleasure, because they also wanted to meet such family. Mohlaroyim went to Mirza's place to their daughter and came back home saying "their daughter is very sweet". Both families met each other's sons and they liked them very much. Then they talked about the terms and other issues such as bridewealth and they decided that no one will pay price, the family will just spend the money on wedding expenses. That was all.

So soon after these events they held a wedding party within a week. So Solikh Mahdum got married.

In the third year Solikh Mahdum's business also started to flourish and now there were more than thirty students at his school.

When Solikh Mahdum was about thirty years old he achieved great success in his career as a teacher. And his students were more than hundred. Now his sitting-room did not have enough rooms for all the students, so he built another separate room for his school and made a new room for practicing handwriting. Mahdum was not satisfied with it and so he started to use his wife Nigorkhanum's help as well. First of all, she had been taught a little and then she became a teacher. Girls from two or three quarter gathered to participate in Nigorkhanum's lessons. In short, as Mahdum's school business succeeded they were able to establish better life for themselves.

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When he was almost forty years old he became imam to the makhalla and he was given a new nickname "Teacher Mullah Solikh Mahdum" by every man of the district. For instance, he got the title as a teacher of handicrafts, traders, students of madrassahs and other new layers of the society. Even there were some of his students who started working at Khan's palace and you can read about this from other chapters of our book.

4

SOME FEATURES OF MAHDUM

As the facts which had been mentioned above, we think, our readers could understand that Mahdum's income might not have been as much as a Bek in the village or city, but for sure it was more than the income of a Mudarris⁵ who had the vaqf⁶ in his hands. Although he had a very good income, but still he had some bad behavior such as stinginess, greediness, abhorrence and others...

His father passed away when he was a child and he had to live in difficulties and might be some of his bad habits were the result of that complicated life. But we are not going to analyze Mahdum's character. We just want to provide him to the readers as he was.

One cannot hide something from other people. Of course, Mahdum had some signs of greediness. If we say that he used to be greedy as he had nothing to do when he was in trouble, but he still carried on this so now we can say that he is a greedy person.

He has got patches on his shirts and pants all the time. And he never changes or buys a new oriental robe for the past seven years. And it gets new patches every year and it

⁵ Teacher at madrassah

⁶ A type of tax at that times

was getting older and older from year to year. And this robe only once was washed by Nigorkhanum's naggings during these seven years. Now it is in the bundle with its various patches everywhere waiting for its next service for Mahdum. People from the makhalla named this robe "money earner". When Mahdum wore this robe people would laugh saying "the money earner has come back from the market... it is still in a very good condition. If it does not get tired of patches it will serve to him for another ten years". But they would say it to each other in a low voice so that Mahdum would not notice. In short, makhalla would laugh not only at his robe but also at his mahsi⁷. It was made from cheap cow's skin, turban which was very old and his old shoes. Besides, he had a robe made from banoras⁸ and an adras quilted robe worn in cold weather. But these things would be worn only on holidays, parties and khayits. Even though people named the banoras robe "need", they have not had name for his adras quilt yet, because it was bought only four or five years ago.

At this very point we would like to mention Mahdum's summer clothes: striped, linen robe, wide linen shirt (if it is narrow, it can be torn), trousers and yellowish shoes for holidays. He had only one turban for all the seasons of the year.

5

FAMILY AND TREATMENT WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Mahdum would never let other members of his family dress in good clothes. He would buy the worst products and clothes. For example, he would let his wife

⁷ A shoe without hard back and heel and with soft sole

⁸ Type of material

wash thing only once a month, and if he saw Nigorkhanum washing things more than once a month he would shout at her "you will decay the things in the basin". They cooked pilaf only once in two weeks, their main meals were mastava, soup, noodle soup and other such kinds of food.

They ate meat only when they cooked pilaf. But Mahdum used to provide the kitchen with some vegetables like turnips, pumpkins and beetroots. Even though his wife used to refuse what he brought and asked him not to do so, he said that turnip was a gift of Saint Fotimai Zuhra and the pumpkin was the miracle of Saint Yunus. So he brought all kinds of cheap stuff to his house for different religious reasons. He asked his wife to bake pumpkin pies at least once a week but at the same time he told her not to pour too much oil in it as it could damage the taste of the pies. They neither bought nor baked bread as bread was brought for "Thursdayship" and always was enough for the week. And sometimes they would even sell some of the bread at the market.

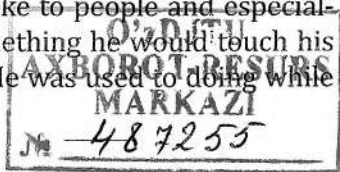
Mahdum would treat his students very warmly. Even though he scolded and punished the student, he would never beat them for their bad behavior and habits. He managed to gain the respect of children from Kokand. But he would never let the children go anywhere and even some of them needed "freedom" this was supposed to be obtained by giving him a kind of bribe. Both children of the rich and the poor had the same rules concerning freedom. When children started to learn Haftiyak, Koran, Sufi Allayar and other such kind of books they were, as a rule, supposed to bring presents for their teachers. But most of the student would tell lies to their teacher and ran away without giving presents or throwing a party. Some parents would carry out their "responsibilities" but mostly Mahdum would be cheated by them. The Thursdayship was kind of a deposit to the school and it would come with bread and some other meals and food. Children would pay "payment for staff"

once a year and every month they were supposed to pay for a broom.

Mahdum always tried to involve as many students to his school as possible and especially he wanted to attract the children of the rich and the Beys. For example, he called the rich children from other schools with the help of his students and asked questions. If they were not able to answer him he told them "it is not your fault, this is just a failure of your teacher, and if you desire you are always welcome to attend our school! I myself will teach you and be your friend". As a result, children started to dislike their teachers and soon afterwards they began to attend Solikh Mahdum's school. Sometimes he treated the students of other school like this in the streets. He would greet the rich and honored people very warmly even though he did not know them at all. After greeting with them he asked them about their children and whether they wanted to study at school or not. At the same time, he mentioned about his warm treatment and easy methods of teaching. For sure, these efforts by Mahdum never were in vain and new students started to attend his school from day to day.

He hated all the other teachers. If he had chance at meetings he would say "you mean that teacher... yeah, I heard that he is wasting student's lives there, and I know it as lots of his students now are studying at my school. First I told them that I had had enough time and there were too many students of my own but then I just did not want to waste their lives and agreed to join them to my school". After saying these words, he would pinch his rival and took the first chance to say bad words about his other rivals as well.

Mahdum was a tall man with a mustache. He had white skin and a warm face. He was fifty or more and he had some white hairs as well. When he spoke to people and especially when he was surprised of something he would touch his beard and close one of his eyes. He was used to doing while



saying the word "habba" many times during the conversation. This word always was used by him and in all senses and no one knew what he meant by this word and nobody had never asked him about it either. The word "habba" might mean "at-taboy" or "yes exactly", because he used this word when he was pleased with something or agreed with someone.

We have written some pages about Mahdum's habits and character. And perhaps, we gossiped about him as well. And we will continue gossiping in the future. But the most important thing is we neither added anything nor omitted anything about him and we will do it again as well. But now we would like to mention one Mahdum's features which can wash away all his other lacks and then we will continue our story: he was one of the leading people of his time and the one who taught people in Kokand to be literate and brought up students who served at the supreme levels of the society.

6

NIGORKHANUM

Nigorkhanum was unhappily married. First of all, he was very poor and when Mahdum became rich, he turned into a greedy person. She cried a lot about it. Now she was forty years old and she had been living with her husband for twenty five years. She was the mother of seventeen year old daughter Rano, eight year old Mahmud (two children who had been born between Rano and Mahmud died), six year old son Mansur and a baby Ma'sud.

Nigorkhanum turned out to be more patient than other women of Kokand. Is there any woman who cannot accept her own son's greediness? But Mahdum's mother Mohlaroyim could not stand his behavior and in the end she moved to her elder son's place in Margilan and died there. Nigorkhanum, however, was very patient and she thought that even

if she was not happy with her husband she would be very happy to see her daughter getting married. She hoped that she could become happy one day thanks to her sons. So, this patient woman started to feel better and happier thanks to her daughter Rano and her elder son. So she understood that every dog has its own day.

A shoemaker or worker beats his wife, and sometimes abuses her and even kicks her. This happens because of poverty. And if the shoemaker earns more money and they believe in their future in that case both his wife and he himself will forget about what had happened the day before. They again start loving each other instead of hating and they will become like Yusuf and Zulaykho⁹.

If we have a look at families of the higher layers of the society we can see completely different situation here: everything is provided, they have got the money enough till the end of their lives and they can buy whatever they want. But still they quarrel everyday and the most important thing is they do not know why such kind of quarrels and misunderstandings are going on in their families. If everything is all right with their family incomes what is the reason in this case?

And our Mahdum also wanted to become very rich and happy. He would live a better life. He has never beaten Nigorkhanum, but he abused her and it seemed to her even worse than beating. He had more than two hundred golden coins (we will talk about how he had earned them a little bit later) and two trunks of clothes after the parties thrown by educated students. He gave these clothes neither to his wife nor to his daughter and let alone the using of the golden coins. But the worst thing was the fact that Nigorkhanum could not even own her money earned by herself teaching the students. She was to report about everything to her

⁹ Yusuf and Zulaykho is a novel about two characters endless love to each other

husband. And Mahdum bought her a dress and trousers made of the cheapest linen. He hardly bought her new robe and shoes every five or six years. Nigorkhanum was a short woman with small eyes. She was not an ugly woman. She would treat both her own children and her students very warmly. She punished them just saying "I wish you died some day" when she was very angry. She did not ask anything for "their freedom" and she was punished by her husband for being too kind to them. She spoke very seldom but very meaningfully and she talked to all the women equally unlike the other femile-teachers. Even though women laughed at Mahdum's behavior and habits they never gossiped about Nigorkhanum. On the contrary, they felt sorry for her as she was like a prisoner in Mahdum's hands.

7

RANO

In many cases people's names do not coincide with their manners. When I was young I was looking especially for the ideal person proudly. I do not remember exactly where it was, perhaps it happened in our family but anyway one day there was talk about a girl by the name of Lola who was a dressmaker. And the people who were talking about her were very close to me, so it was embarrassing to ask about her beauty. That's why I could not ask them about what was more important – her beauty or her profession. But I saw a beautiful girl under the name Lola and I thought that she is to have the beauty which can coincide with the name Lola¹⁰. Since that day I wanted to see this girl. To see the girls who was over sixteen years old was really impossible and ten years earlier it was even harder. For some time I was eager to see Lola. Once I met her when she came out of

¹⁰ The word "lola" in the Uzbek language means "tulip"

her house with a pitcher to bring some water. She had just a ring in her nose (if the ring can be considered as a beauty of girls) which could be worth mentioning as her good sides and nothing else expect that she deserved the name Lola.

I asked a boy who was standing near me who was the girl picking up the water and he answered:

– That is my sister Lola.

The boy's pronunciation sounded to me like "my sister Mola"¹¹. For several days I was angry with the people who named her as Lola, because I beg your pardon, but I could dare to be angry...

But Rano's name was really an appropriate one for her. I am not a painter. If I were a painter I would not have spoken like a chatter box, I could have drawn her picture, but in that case I would need more water of the flower rano¹².

Solikh Mahdum is a greedy and sly person, so every-way we cannot consider him as a good person. Nature is not greedy so it can create a flower from a prickle and honey from bees. Like this girl by the name Rano was created with her exceptionally good smell and beauty from the wooden prickle.

We, the Uzbeks, and especially in Kokand there is a color which resembles yellow. But this color cannot be called completely yellow. Because for us the yellow color denotes the image of a sick person. And, even some other colors which resemble the yellow one cannot be define as such. If our definition can describe her appropriately we would say that she was like a light colored Rano flower. And even her hair on her body resembled that color. Rano's hair was dark black but it changed into light orange color when she walked under the sun. Her eyes also had such a kind of manner of changing their color: if she stared at someone's her eyes changed their color. She had a circle of hair dye under her eyelashes. Even though her eyebrows looked united to

¹¹ Mola can be translated into English like "wooden harrow"

¹² Austrian brier

each other there was still some space between them. And her nose was so beautiful that even the critic could not criticize it. There were unnoticeable hairs above her tender and beautiful lips. Her face was neither oval nor round. And when she smiled at people, her face turned into shaddy red like an apple. It seemed like a real Rano flower that flourished. Her hair was very long and thick. She was neither too tall nor too short. She had painted her fingers with henna. Anyway she was like the object of the songs sung not only in Kokand but all around the Fergana valley.

Rano was Nigoroyim's eldest daughter. She will be seventeen this year. She was taught by her father and when she was fourteen years old she was able to complete the entire curriculum of the ancient school. For example, she learned religious books like "Haftiyak", "Koran", "Chahor", "Sufi Allayar", "Maslaki muttaqin" and literary books: she studied all the works by Alisher Navoi, devoni Fuzuliy and Layli and Majnun; Amiriy, Fazliy and other's works; books in the Persian language by Khodja Hofiz Sheroziy and Mirzo Bedil. Besides this she practiced handwriting, essay writing and almost other studies. On one hand she was teaching girls to help her mother and on the other hand she was being taught kofiya and Sheikh Sadiy's "Guliston" by her father. Besides this she was gathering the collection of works by her beloved Chigatay-Uzbek writers and poets. Sometimes she composed poems but she never showed them to anybody. If she really likes her poems in that case she would show them to one single person. And this person is her trusted one. He also never tells anybody about her poems.

In short, Rano was both beautiful and clever. And it can be considered as a rare case in the period of the Khans. And we are the one who is responsible to mention her manners and beauty.

Even as Rano tries to be very serious her childish manners can be noticed anyway: she participates in her

brother's games as an inseparable part. She argues with the female-students when her mother cannot notice it. And she gets angry very fast and leaves the students when they do not do well at school. Even though her mother did not say anything to her for such kind of manner, but her father always punishes her. And she does not like her father very much as she was punished by him very often and he always scolds her mother for not being economical in the kitchen. And when she is angry with her father she will tell her mother with a serious face the following: "You yourself are to be blamed for not getting married to a better man than my father and we would not be in such kind of troubles then." And having heard these words Nigoroyim always smiles.

One day when Rano was very cross with her father, she composed an interesting poem about her father. She showed it to her man and he also laughed and said that it was very amusing.

And now we would like to stop introducing some of the characters of our book here. If we were not able to describe them very clearly and thoroughly now you can get familiarized with them in the next pages closer. That's why we did not describe them in detail.

8

A PERSON FROM HORDE

Mahdum owned a three storeyed house. There was a sitting-room, school and practice-room on the first floor. And there was 0.25 square acres of orchard with peach, apple, fig and other trees and grapes on the second floor. Perhaps, Mahdum could use the children very effectively so there was not any spare place in the corners of the orchard. There were various types of trees. There was a clay supa under the hedge and summer flowers such as basil

and other plants had been planted around the supa. They smelt very tasty. There was pavement leading to the supa and inside the orchard on the first floor.

Now it is the beginning of October and the fruits in the orchard were ripe and especially the grapes called "lady fingers" look very tasty. The pavement had been watered and even though there was any carpet on the supa, there was a felt mat spread on it and kurpachas spread on three sides of the felt mat.

Having given the meat to his wife Mahdum practiced his handwriting with his students for about two hours. And he sent a boy to his house tying up his hands who managed to write the word "abjad" very well. When the boy came back with "untie things" from his house he let all the students go home and finished his lesson for that day.

As Mahdum was about to enter, a man dressed up very casual, came in through the gate. He greeted Mahdum warmly and came up to him. It was the first time Mahdum met this man dressed up in the clothes of a clerk at the chancellery of the Horde. They greeted each other. Mahdum invited him to the sitting-room. The guest also did not refuse his invitation and went after Mahdum. When they sat down they said some blessings. When the guest looked at Mahdum with a smile he put himself together.

– If I am not mistaken you are Mirzo Anvar's teacher, aren't you?

– I am...

– Is everybody all right?

– Thanks to Allah.

This guest who was warmly talking to Mahdum was a tall dark skinned man with a long black beard and a turban. He was about forty years old.

– I also work together with Anvar at the chancellery of Horde. Perhaps, you have heard about me, my name is Sul-tonali mirzo, – said the guest.

– Well, well, – said Mahdum smiling, – I have heard about you from Anvar, he told me about you. Why have you come here? I am very happy of your visit to our shabby house.

– I came here without any invitation though it is very rude of me, – said Sultonali Mirzo. But I was made by my friend Anvar's love.

These words of Sultonali were about to give a hint to Mahdum why he was here. He was enjoying the conversation and it could be noticed from his face. He looked at Sultonali closing his eye.

– Well, well, – said Mahdum, – has a new clerk been appointed instead of the late Muhammad Rajab? I could not talk to Anvar about it recently as I did not have time.

– Not yet, but we think one of these days someone will be appointed.

– Perhaps there must be many good nominees?

– Yes, there are some. Some nominees such as the poet Madhiy, Mullah Shahodat Mufti and others had been submitted to the Khan. Perhaps you have heard about him, some Mirzas proposed Anvar's candidate to the Khan even though he refused it. We hope that Anvar Mirzo will be appointed to this post, – said Sultonali.

Mahdum touched his beard. As if he did not know how to answer Sultonali's last words.

– I have heard about some good people's attitude towards Anvar, – said Mahdum in a grateful voice, – but I think if Anvar is appointed to his post can he cope with it? It seems to me that it is very responsible and complicated task for him, isn't it?

Sultonali smiled and said:

– I agree with you that the post of head clerk is very complicated, but Mirza Anvar can manage it, I am sure. And I am aware of Anvar's talent better than you. You may believe me.

– By the way, I helped Anvar very much, – said Mahdum as if he was boasting. I brought him up. I paid more atten-

tion to him than the other hundred, or may be even thousands of my students. And I think that's why he grew up as a talented person... and I meant, of course, he might be very talented but he is too young and he has not got enough experience in this job.

– Knowledge does not depend on person's experience or age, Imam Azam Rahmatullohi Alayhi used to teach when he was twelve years old and even he started to write the holy book at that age. So, the age does not matter but knowledge and cleverness matters. For example, I reached the level of "Aqid" and I have been working as a Mirzo for almost ten years. Now I have very good experience in this field but at the same time I must point out that I am at much lower level than your student Mirzo Anvar. I need Anvar's help in writing, explanation of text meanings and in the science of learning Muslim laws. Actually I am much older than him and maybe he has not read the books which I have read... even the late head clerk Mullah Muhammad Rajab was surprised at Anvar's talent and he used to say "a very good guy". And I am suggesting Anvar to this post because he deserves it and I don't have any rivalry towards him. But Mirzo Anvar does not want to get this post and nowadays he is cross with us for we have suggested him. I heard that he even wants to write a statement saying that he cannot manage this responsibility. Why he is refusing it, we do not understand actually... Perhaps it is not polite of me but anyway I came here to ask your advice. First of all you are like his father and secondly, you are his teacher. We thought may be he will accept our offer if you ask you about it.

– Habba! – Said Mahdum happily, – We haven't talked about it in details yet, but we will talk for sure and perhaps he will agree.

– I wish you all the best, sir.

Mahdum pressed his eye touching his beard:

– During the lunch time I was asked by some people about it. They asked me whether it was true that Anvar was

about to be appointed as a head clerk. It turns out that he is famous in the city as well huh? – Asked Mahdum.

– Might be, – said smiling Sultonali and after a while he started to speak as if he was telling him a secret, – Some of us from the horde asked and suggested Anvar's candidate to Mullah Muhammad Niyoz and Ogacha oyim. That's why we are sure that Mirzo Anvar will be appointed to this post. Only one point is Anvar's agreement.

– But, – said Mahdum with a bright face, – You have done a great job suggesting Anvar to the queen and Muhammad Niyoz.

– We also think so. Now we ask Allah to make our dream come true.

– Inshaallah.

– So you are the one who is responsible to persuade mirzo Anvar, sir even though it might sound impolite of us, – said Sultonali again.

– Don't worry, I think I will be able to persuade him, – said Mahdum patiently.

Then Sultonali asked him not to tell Anvar about his arrival and left. When Mahdum told him that the meal was being prepared and invited for dinner, he refused it and said good bye to him. Mahdum saw him off at the gate which was unusual case for Mahdum. He usually did not see most people off at the gate.

9

OFFENCE AND JOKE

Mahdum was having ablution thinking about the sweet dreams of future. Ablution is supposed to be carried out in certain order, but Mahdum was violating these rules. He even was using the blessing incorrectly. So Mahdum had carried out the ablution in this way and en-

tered inside. Nigoroyim was putting manti into the pot and Rano was sitting with her younger brothers at the terrace.

As she saw her father entering she stood up holding Masud in her hands. Then she took the turban and robe from the hook and came up to him. Children stopped their games in front of their father.

– Anvar has not come yet, the supa is still alone, – said Mahmud putting on his turban and robe, – Rano, go and sit on the supa till I come back from evening prayer.

– All right.

When her father left she took her little brother and went out. Mahmud and Mansur also followed her.

– Sister Rano, sister Rano! – Shouted Mansur complaining Mahmud, who tried to overtake him. They already approached the supa in the garden. Screaming and crying Mansur intensified, and soon had to scold senior brother.

– Oh, Mahmud, Mahmud, Mahmud stupid!

Ahead of his brother, Mahmud finally stopped. Grieved Mansur sat on the ground and started in a screaming voice not his own. Rano picked it up and brushed the dust from his clothes.

– Do not cry, my brother, do not cry, – she said. – Here comes the father, Mahmud will spank you... Here, Mahmud, father comes, don't think I won't tell?

Holding his sister sobering Mansur climbed the supa.

Mahmud did not expect that it will turn to him so gloomy.

– And what will make my father? – He asked from afar.

– Let him come... You forgot recent stick?

Mahmud said nothing, but his face expressed resentment and fear.

Rano stood with her younger brother in her arms on the supa, Mansur pressed his shoulder against Rano, mockingly staring at confused by Mahmud.

Mahmud could not carry him. He decided to take revenge from Rano.

– And you are the wife of Mulla aka! He cried. – Scientist brother's wife! Ay-ay-ay, ay-ay-ay!

Rano laughed.

– You are teasing? Well, wait a minute, boorish boy! – She said menacingly moved towards Mahmud.

– I know, I know: Mulla aka's wife, wife, Mullah aka! – Repeated Mahmud, laughing at Rano, smiling, looked at Mansur.

– You mean I am Mulla aka's wife? – She asked.

Instead of answering, Mansur looked towards the entrance and ran the ladder from supa, joyfully shouting:

– Mulla aka had come! Mulla aka had come!

Rano blushed, tossed on the back-ruffling braids and straightened dress. Young man followed the way down the path to the supa. Well-built dressed in bekasam robe, small black strip Anvar looked handsome. Without taking off his black eyes from Rano he squatted on the tracks and opened his embrace to meet running to him Mansur. He kissed the boy and took him in his arms and headed for the supa.

Rano greeted him with a smile.

– Hormang! (How do you do) Do not you get tired!

– Thank you!

Anvar got up to the supa and put Mansur down. Taking off his shoes, he went to Rano, kissed little Masud on his cheek. The kid reached for him, and Anvar took him from the girl. Finding himself in the hands of Anvar Masud jumped and shouted cheerfully. Rano handed and began to beckon him to her. "Come to me, to me" – she called. But the boy away from her chest and buried into Anvar. Rano laughed and shook her: "Well, you are same little traitor!"

Holding the hands of Masud, Anvar sat on the supa. Mansur immediately pressed him on the left, near him Rano sat. Together they caressed the baby. Anvar then gave the child to the girl, took off his gray silk turban, threw it on the pillow and wiped his jet-black mustache. Rano looked at him.

- Is everything all right at home? - Asked Anvar.
 - Very restless, - said Rano laughing.
 - Well, then, all right... Yes, by the way, - said Anvar, surveying, supa, - today everything is beautifully done, are you cooking something special?
 - We are waiting for the guests.
 - Do not lie, Rano, - Anvar said smiling. - What kind of guests?
 - How do I know? I heard that people should come to read fatiha.
 - What's the occasion of fatiha?
 - I do not know.
 Anvar thought, then smiled and said:
 - Maybe it will be your fatiha?
 - How can they read fatiha for me - I am still alive.
 - Do not shirk, Rano! Maybe, you are going to marry?
 Rano blushed and said jokingly:
 - Who will marry me?
 - You? - Anvar laughed. - But who, except a Khan may marry you?
 Rano, staring at the child, who was holding, said:
 - Well... if you say so... Well that remains to me do?... -
 And turned to Mansur: - Stand up, Mansur, go here.
 She was resentfully looking down. Anvar embarrassed.
 - Rano! - He called.
 She stopped on the stairs.
 - Tell me, is it true that there will be guests?
 - Yes, guests. - She said seriously.
 Anvar was surprised:
 - Guest has already come?
 - Yes, they came.
 Anvar looked around.
 - Where is he?
 Rano pointed to him.
 - Here's a guest!

Anvar laughed.

– Am I a guest?

Rano replied pointedly:

– Of course. You are a guest for us.

Anvar laughed again, but his laughter sounded already constrained.

– I am a Guest for you!

Smilingly, Rano looked at Anvar, shaking from side to side, she began to calm child who suddenly got capricious in her hand.

– I do not know...

But feigned severity was gone from her eyes.

– Rano, – he said, – your guest is very hungry. I hope that for such an esteemed guest you cooked something delicious. Perhaps you would be so kind and let me know with what you would treat me?

– The guest should sit and eat, what he will be served, and praise for all.

– Right you say, otin Bibi, – said Anvar. – However, if to-day you treat me by a noodle soup as yesterday, the possibility is not compliment that, I refuse to crimination.

Rano laughed aloud.

– Today we have a soup, – she said with a laugh. – You can serve it with stale cake... instead of meat you have to chew turnip!

– Well, – said Anvar, – I think I will be very grateful to you for today's feast. And may I know with whose hands – senior or junior otin¹³ Bibi – turnip soup is cooked today?

– For guests it cannot have a cost ...

– You are mistaken, Rano khonim, – said Anvar “There are no two people alike”.

– Well, if so... You'll get soup with turnip from the hands of the junior.

¹³ Otin – woman teacher (at home, of traditional subjects), reads mystic poetry at gatherings

– In this case, my apologies, Rano khanim... Out of your hands turnips seem probably, nice!

Rano wanted to say something, laughed at Anvar with a quick glance and grasping for the hand of Mansur, ran to the women's quarters.

10

WELL-WISHER

Rano did not have time to hide inside, as Mahdum entered and said:

– Come, Shahidbek, please come in!

Behind him, treading heavily and puffing at every turn, a fat man of fifty was following him. A blue silk turban wrapped his head. Bushy eyebrows hung over his eyes, silver belt covered the waist, his huge belly. At the entrance to the garden occurred in:

– Come in...

– No, you are first...

– I beg you!

– Would it not be bad manners on my part. But the ceremony was clearly unnecessary burden on Shahidbek, he did not want to bore himself and went ahead Mahdum.

– Mirza Anvar already is here... hum... – He said.

Anvar stood up to meet them. They climbed to the supa.

Shahidbek greeted Anvar humbly, not waiting for an invitation, plopped down on the place of honor, for to climb the ladder to the supa for him was very difficult. He has no strength left for further ceremonies. Having taken rest, he withdrew from sitting the outer robe, and took the belt, putting it next to him. He took off his turban and threw it on the pillow, and wiped sweat from his forehead and began fanning herself.

– Are you healthy, Mirza?

– Thank God, healthy. And you?

– Thanks God!

Mahdum asked Anvar:

– Anvar, you seem a little delayed today in the palace?

– I've got urgent cases.

– After the death of the chief clerk of the Shahidbek palace – the whole brunt of the work, they say, fell on you. Mirza, don't you?..

– Yes, – Anvar replied, – Sometimes urgent letters and orders, need time to be sent to regions. Then you have to spend the night at the palace.

Shahidbek again wiped his sweaty forehead.

– Nothing can be done, nothing can be done.

Anvar surreptitiously glanced at Mahdum, got up and went to the ladder putting on shoes and Mahdum said to him:

– Go inside, find out whether the meal is ready. When it is ready, bring it.

– All right.

Anvar went into the room.

Looking after him, Shahidbek asked Mahdum:

– How long had Mirza lived with you?

– Almost fourteen years.

– We see he is like your own son?

– More than that!

– Your daughter has also become an adult?

– Thank God...

– God give them a long life! – Shahidbek said. – You can make Mirza your son-in-law.

– There is such thought! Mahdum replied. – We treated him, like our own child, and now, we prefer Anvar to many other precious and noble families...

– Correctly, – said Shahidbek. – Truly it's the most correct way!.. You understand that when choosing son-in-law, you should take in mind his learning and good manners...

– Hubby! – Said, winking, Mahdum. – We are just guided by these considerations.

Shahidbek was Mahdum's neighbor by the street and worked at a small office of the tax collectors at Khudoyar Khan. Shahidbek was not particularly close with Mahdum, once even restored neighbor residents against him, who did not want Mahdum to become their imam. Sudden friendship between them started only two or three days ago, because those days there was talk everywhere about the possible appointment of chief Anvar to the palatial office. These conversations made friends and enemies of Mahdum to make a pause. Incidentally, Shahidbek lost almost a quarter of his weight: because tax collectors partially subordinated to the Chief of the Office. If he does not establish relations with Mahdum any trouble could occur. Mentally Shahid already has heard how Mahdum says to Anvar: "This bey once hurt me, now let him pay: remove him from the office of the tax collector." Of course, Anvar will not dare to refuse the request to his teacher, and becoming governor may dismiss from office Shahidbek.

Shahidbek, of course, had no desire for Anvar's appointment to the office manager, but he was unable to protest. Although the promotion was only Anvar preposition, Shahidbek just in case decided to take precautions. Few days ago, wanting to get close to Mahdum, he began by saying that, he reveals to the mosque for prayer, he moved near him and used to pray in another mosque – and listened to the words, which was read by Mahdum. The next day, after morning prayers, he bowed to Mahdum and asked about health and said:

– As I was delighted to hear that Anvar is to be appointed the chief clerk! Well, our people should serve at the palace. I have already asked for it my yard friends.

Despite its practicality, Mahdum could not distinguish a friend from an enemy, even a couple of kind words or some

money could make him forget the benefits of permanent resentment. And then he immediately believed around." We see this bugger beat Satan and forgot their feud, it was delighted purpose of Anvar. So, no matter how strong Satan, all justice prevailed! "He thought, and told to Shahidbek everything he knew about the intended purpose. Now coming before the sunset prayer, he complained to Shahidbek " fool " Anvar, who is dissatisfied with the upcoming, assignment wants to give up, Shahidbek was thinking it a little said, " Let me see, I 'll talk to Anvar Mirza"... After all, if Anvar will be appointed, and in this case some kind of stake will belong to Shahidbek, then word, the rest is clear. Mentally Shahidbek already saw before him a wide field of activities.

– If you have told me, when Mirza Anvar would be at home, I would have gone to him, – he said to Makhmoom

Until that day, Mahdum did not believe the rumors about the value of Anvar. Anvar himself answered all inquiries of Mahdum – "empty words and nonsense". But now everybody talked about this Kokand. To top it all, who ever visited Mahdum Sultanali Mirza will ask him seriously to affect Anvar. Mahdum now seems that the main thing – is to persuade Anvar, and he felt the need for advisers and assistants. Therefore, the proposal of Shahidbek was taken very kindly, and said:

– Hubby! Perhaps now Anvar is at home, if you please, come to our place.

11

MAHDUM'S THREAT

Anvar spread a tablecloth and brought three dishes of manti. Sitting opposite to each other around the cloth, all three of them began eating. During the meal Shahidbek slowly began to choose the target.

– People are just talking, – he said, eating manti, – That you are going to take the position of the chief clerk...We did not understand: is it true or just a rumor? Of course, we learn from you for sure, but, I confess it is your good desirable wish, and this fact pleased everybody who is like-minded. We constantly hear from the royal court people that you have great talents for classes of this high office...

Here Shahidbek looked at Mahdum. Mahdum was pinching his beard where a piece of dough got stuck and asked the guest to eat.

– Yesterday, – Mahdum said, eating, – The mandate would be yours, I do not really believe these rumors. Today, however, I am no longer surprised. Is it really that Anvar will be appointed chief clerk? Thank God, knowledge of his great mind is obvious, and God is not attaching abilities affairs...

Finishing the meal dish, Anvar smiled. From the summer heat and hot dumplings Shahidbek was sweating. Wiping his forehead and neck, he looked at Anvar.

– Well, Mirza Anvar, will you tell us?

– Discussions are going, – said Anvar, glancing at Mahdum. – But they are carried out without my participation and against my will. So, do not attach importance to what they say.

Mahdum and Shahidbek looked at each other.

– So you do not want to take the position of chief clerk?

– Asked Shahidbek.

– Of course not.

– But why?

– Because I do not like high and responsible positions.

– Anvar said, lowering his eyes and staring at some point on the tablecloth.

– But these horsemen, you cannot remain always in the same place. As soon as they gain experience, they were promoted. So you obviously are going to promote in the post,

ahem...Your talent and your knowledge obliges you to accept the appointment.

– I'm not so talented, as they say, – said Anvar. – A young man like me, who came so recently to the palace, it is ridiculous to think that he become the chief clerk. I want to say that there are clerks, muftis, poets, who are there for twenty and thirty years, they sleep and dream about how to take this post. It's not funny to inexperienced youth to be picked ahead of them? I was particularly surprised that even people who know the palace customs and intrigues, and on my own skin I tested these rumors.

Shahidbek wiped his hands and laughed.

– Your lack of faith is in yourself – just kidding!

– Kidding, kidding! – Caught Mahdum. Manti was eaten. Mahdum drank the tea poured on the plate and licked it clean. After they have read a prayer, Anvar wanted to carry out the tablecloth and dishes, but Shahidbek stopped him:

– Wait, Mirza leave dishes before to resolve the issue.

Anvar put all on the edge of the supa and sat down again. Mahdum belched loudly and said: – Thanks God!

– Well, so how is it, Mirza Anvar?

– It will be, as I said, aka. Don't talk about this anymore.

Shahidbek looked at Mahdum. Mahdum suddenly said:

– Is it worth or not, you should finally listen to what I'll tell you, my son!

– Please, tell me!

– According to rumors that have come to us, – said Shahidbek, fingering, – In the list of recommended individuals his majesty chose your name!

– According to rumors, – Anvar smiled.

– Judging by the facts expressed by true people of the palace, the certificate will be written in your name.

– "It" does not mean like this...

– Well, – said Shahidbek, fanning himself with a towel, – let 's just say "if", heh heh heh... What do you do if the diploma will be issued at all in the name of the above?

Anvar laughed and glanced at Mahdum.

– Bek aka, it's impossible.

Mahdum frowned and looked at Anvar. Shahidbek said:

– No, you answer the question: if it would be so?

– Then I ask to forgive me and give up.

– Nonsense! – Mahdum said and turned away. Shahidbek shook his head ruefully:

– You're contradicting yourself. Earlier you said: "Apart from me, there are a lot of bidders, I cannot hope for such an increase." And now different talks are going on.

– Sin repels gifts of God, bread is being trampled by foot. – Mahdum said.

Anvar smiled again, then, becoming serious, said:

– Well, let's say that I, as people say, have the ability to perform the duties of the head clerk. I'll occupy this place, whether they give me a chance... What do you think about those people who for twenty – thirty years were waiting to get this position? Do not they leave me alone? Will they not struggle to pull me off from this place? That's why I want to stay at my small place. My present work though has high values, I prefer it to all the high posts. That's why I'm going, as my teacher said, to deny the gift given by God.

Shahidbek looked at Mahdum.

– If you serve well and do your duties honestly, – said solemnly Mahdum – so, even though the whole world gangs up on you, then a hair of your head will not fall. Truth always wins and untruth is defeated. Whoever fears gossip and slander and therefore refuses to serve people! There is Turkic proverb: «Being afraid of a sparrow he did not sew millet " – It's said about coward people. If you want to be like those who do not sow self-fearing sparrows... then I misjudged you, my son.

– All this is true! – Anvar laughed, and then, after a pause, he said: – In words, truth wins over lie, I heard it many times, but still have not seen this in reality. You know

better than me, for example, what trouble fell on Khan Saidkhan clerks, Mullu Siddik and Mumindjan, and in fact they are not criminals as khan considers them. Their only fault is that the rotation doused them with dirt lies, slander braided. After having served for many years at the palace, I learned it well by every day watching the squabbling and infighting between employees; I disdain position that is constantly being under the intrigue.

- Your example, - said Mahdum sadly, - Is exception, a rare case... If you are afraid of all, so you can't serve at the palace, even you can't walk in the streets freely. No, happiness smiled to you, you can't release from the hands the golden bird - it is a great sin, my son!

- Yes, teacher, - said Shahidbek, - Correctly you say... My brother, Anvar's happiness in life comes only once, hrr... If you don't grasp it firmly, then the second time it will not come at all, and you will forever be the back foot of the horse.

- Thank you for your care, I think that you sincerely want my happiness, and if you excuse me, I'll go...

Mahdum angrily squinted his eye and looked askance at Anvar. He always looked at like that when was strongly angry.

- Anvar, who am I to you?

- You... You are my teacher...

- Tell me, did my guidance and advice ever work in harm to you?

- In use, I have not seen anything from you so far! But this time I want to be independent.

Mahdum indignation came to his throat and he had to swallow saliva.

- Please, do as you think is right, but then your stubbornness is simply nonsense! - he said, chopping the air with hand. - Here's my opinion: I am your teacher and father, and you do not dare disobey me otherwise, blame yourself and do your best!

These words could be heard as a real threat, so Anvar said nothing.

– Do not get excited, do not get excited! – said Shahidbek – Mirza Anvar was not so... Of course, Mirza Anvar is right, hrr... At the palace not everything goes smoothly. Such things, he was talking about, happen there, but I managed to scout... hum... I can say that everybody at the palace – from junior to elders treats respectfully to Anvar. Who wants to build a plot against the man who does not hurt them?

– Habba! – Exclaimed Mahdum. – What else can be objectionable? Nothing, but you childish fear! ...

Forty gold coins per month salary, and even different khan's gifts, and, moreover, honor and respect, is not grace! Hay-hay-hay!

These words made Anvar laugh. It was hard not to laugh, trying to be serious, he said:

– It seems a bit premature to talk about it – because I have not received the certification of the chief clerk...

– Anvar, my son, I know it, – he said, relenting, – but if God sends you this honor, I am afraid that you with your childish arguments would injure things, so I say this in advance. I heard you're going to write to Khan a statement that will get failure on our purpose?

– Who said that?

– Leave who said it! But today your speech gives reason to think that you can do it. Is it the truth?

– The one who told you possibly told you the truth. However, if you do not approve this... then of course...

– Habba! – Mahdum cried out. – Let your childishness and cowardice alone, only qualities. «If you give a pass, so fall from the highest point» – the proverb says.

Saying so, Mahdum proudly looked at Shahidbek. He was doubly proud: first, by Anvar words – “if you do not approve,” confirmed that Anvar is considered the opinion of

Mahdum and the second, showing that he would not go to any persuasions against the will of the teacher.

Shahidbek, after eating too much and having got hot discussion over dinner, got tired and now leaned on pillows, welcomed the agreement reached understanding – Well done, Mirza, that's better, hrr...

After drinking two bowls of tea and reading fatiha with Mahdum, Shahidbek began to gather for evening prayer. Anvar lead Shahidbek to the gate. Saying goodbye to Anvar, Shahidbek said:

– I think, God willing, you will receive a certificate... And then I will be with you at a special conversation, I should advice with some tax collectors. You are like our son, and that fact that you'll be assigned to the post of main clerk, is very fruitful for us.

– If the neighbor has cattle manure and then we census children, – there is such a saying, – added Mahdum.

Having objected to all those talks, Anvar shook his head and returned to the supa.

12

POOR FAMILY IN BAHMALBOF MAKHALLA

Anvar was born in the middle of 1267 in Hidzhra in the very poor family of Bahmalbof makhalla. Usually the mother, having given birth to a child, calls him "my welcome" or "given by God." But our Anvar was for his mother neither desirable, nor God-given, and his father never called him his "son." His father was a cloth painter – always in blue paint to his waist. This poor man had five children smaller one than the other. And the new-born sixth child was our Anvar.

Being neither desired nor welcomed on the contrary he was born against the wishes of his parents, in order to increase their misery and poverty.

When another family has a child, they are greeted with joy, karnaychi-surnaychi, Candys, words, celebratory rituals. The birth of Anvar was not noted in any celebration. The mother did not even call a midwife and gave birth with the help of her eldest daughter Nadira. They did not even send to the neighbors to get "suyunchi" – a gift that is given for the good news. She was afraid that the neighbors only would reproach her saying "let alone they live in such poverty, they have children" or that's the worst said." She gave birth, like a dog".

Therefore, the newborn Anvar for seven or eight days remained a mystery for the neighbors. No one had prepared for him a new diaper, on the ninth day he was stuck in the old and shabby cradle remained from one of his brothers. It was surprisingly, in commemoration of the "forty days" after the birth in his honor is not lit, as it was supposed, more than for twenty days he laid in the cradle without a name, because his father was not up to it, and his mother did not even remember to give the name to the new "honored guest." Maybe everyday worries distracted Salim painter, and Anor Bibi had terrible headache from the rest crying six children. In any case the child was given the name neither by the venerable Imam, nor father, nor mother.

On the twenty-second day of his life the name was given to him by his twelve years old Nadira, his sister.

Having admired for a long by one nice dressed neighbor boy, the son of some spiritual entity; Nadira especially remembered his name – Anvar. Without thinking, she began to call the baby Anvar, spinning eye to him, saying, "Anvardjan, Anvarjan!" And he laid in his cradle. Nadira was the only person, who was really happy when he was born. His sister replaced his mother in his childhood and still had been his closest person.

Thus in the nest of dear Salim, among the storks the lonely dove Anvar appeared and began to live.

As the family grew larger Salim's affairs became worse and the lack of money became harder. Anvar was three years old when the disease already tormented five years of Salim, at the end it dumped him down. He was exhausted from bleeding, and got stuck in his bed. Treatment needed money, but above all they need to feed their family. Salim the painter sold his first blue paint, sold salt, and for this money had some treated. But the disease was much running and all expenses did not bring him goodness. Salim then sold his painting works with all the equipment and made some food supplies. When they ran out of it, the family came to the most difficult days. The winter was very severe, and they were not prepared for the cold.

From the first cold the fourth child died from pneumonia, and then in early spring Salim also said goodbye to the world. Anvar and his two elder brothers got sick with measles, and one of the boys died, too. During the six months Anor Bibi lost her husband and two kids, remained a whole widow with four children. Nadira grew up and could hope that she would find better life, but what to do with the rest of children? The house had almost nothing – two large pitchers, three to four small jags – that's all. Having given birth to eight children Anor Bibi got forty, but she lived a difficult life, and now looked as an old woman. It was needless to think about a new marriage.

Everyone knows what widows, such as Bibi Anor can do: serve as a servant at the fests, help with household at the rich, and those who were more capable – to do enmity against the evil eye, and etc. Anor Bibi raised three children with capability of all these things. Nadira soon married to the son of a weaver, and so it became easeir to pull their heavy life.

"DO YOU KNOW THIS LITTLE GIRL?"

Was it fate or was the life of the poor arranged so badly – again misfortune struck the family of Anvar. Once, serving at the house, Anor-Bibi suddenly felt ill and lost her speech. She had been brought home on a stretcher. Children raised a loud cry. Son-in-law ran for the doctor. It turned out that she was paralysed, and on the same day, not having to bequeath to their children, she died. She was carried to the cemetery. Holding their mother's coffin, with the weeping brothers six years old Anvar also walked.

The growing-up with eleven years old Timur, nine years old Kabil and little Anvar now was the entire burden of Nadira. It was painful to give her brothers to the wrong hands, besides poverty forced her husband to do so. When the days of mourning had passed, she gave two older brothers to people who wished to adopt them and having gathered her mother's belongings, loaded them on the cart, and took with him, Anvar returned to her husband's house.

She caressed Anvar, as his own mother, fed him with sweets and mourned him about his fate. She did not want him to become a painter, as their father, or a weaver, like her husband. She set out to make him a scientist. She even decided to send him to the madrasah to become a mullah and was able to relight the fire in the house of his father. She gave Anvar to Solikh-Mahdum for study, because his school was located not far from her house. Starting the exercise with the slate, Anvar soon showed remarkable ability and by the age of eleven mastered the diploma. He was happy in study, but fate seemed to be chasing him. Nadira had two other own children, and her husband told her: "Whom should I feed – my kids or your brother? Give your

brother to other people!" Nadira resisted as best she could, she was sorry to take Anvar out of school and apprenticed to a cobbler or a weaver, but she was unable to resist her husband for a long time. After some time passed, one day, after the obvious argument with her husband because of Anvar, she wore a veil, and went to the house of Solikh Mahdum. Nadira weepingly told her grief to Mohlar aim, said that she has to endure from her husband because of Anvar. She said:

– I came to your holy house with great hope that the child will be taken by you to continue teaching so that not to vain knowledge which he acquired. I have come to beg you: he is an orphan, do not be pity for a piece of bread for him.

As they say, the poor will always understand the poor. Sincerely the story of Nadira, her plight touched the heart of Mohlar-aim and her daughter Nigor Khanum. Mohlar-aim immediately wanted to see Anvar, who was at the school and asked to call him. The slender handsome boy entered.

– But this is that our brain, whom Mahdum praises so much! Mohlar – said-aim said. – Good, my daughter, – she reassured Nadira, – If your husband does not want to feed him, let him not feed, I myself will raise him, teach him, and make him a great mullah.

Anvar was sad those days: his brother-in-law was against him. Now, hearing the words of Mohlar-aim, he realized what was going on, and lowered his orphan head. Seeing this, his sister got upset, and her eyes filled with tears again.

– Do not cry, daughter, – said Mohlar-aim. – Oh, God damn this poverty! This is nobody's fault that he is poor, such is fate. Well, don't let the boy return to you, beginning with this day he will live with me as my son. What's your name, young rider?

– Anvar...

– And you have a beautiful name, as you... And do you know this little girl?

Six years old Rano ran up to Mohlar-aim and leaned on her.

Anvar looked at the pretty little girl smiled and said:

– This is Ranokhan!

Mohlar-aim took away Rano and told her:

– Come and say hello to your brother Anvar!

Anvar bowed ceremoniously to Rano and came to him.

– Say hello to the same with her, Anvar! – Said Mohlar-aim

Anvar pulled her to him and hugged her sooner. Mohlar-aim laughed:

– While I am alive I'll marry my beautiful girl to Anvar, and he will be my son-in-law.

Anvar was embarrassed and released the girl he held in his arms. The women laughed. Nadira was pleased by kindness of Mohlar-aim, and went home very satisfied.

Of course, Mahdum did not like that one more excess eater appeared at the house, but he could not prevent the same volition of his mother. Yet he grumbled: "feeding is not so difficult, but how to be with clothes? It is necessary so that his sister dressed him..." "Mohlar-aim objected:" People are building mosques, madrasah, and whether we can't dress up one orphan? If you find it hard, I'll make clothes myself."

When he twelve years old, Anvar already moved to the third house and here he was in all respects better than in his own home at his sister's: he could continue his study, and although he wore shabby clothes, at least he was dressed. Now, when he became the adopted son of the teacher, pupils in school stopped teasing him – they were afraid of offending him. After school, he played with Rano, and amused her.

On his thirteen year he graduated from high school and, although he was still very young, began to perform the duties of Halfa, teaching assistant. Mahdum separately taught

him Arabic grammar, and forced to read and memorize lines from "Gulistan" by Saadi.

When Anvar was fifteen years old, he was already able to independently teach lessons at the school, he had a good command of the Persian language and knew a little Arabic. Mahdum first talked of how to give Anvar to the madrasah, but then he stopped this, because, being used to help of Anvar, he became lazy and paid less attention to the school. And Anvar was not thinking about the madrasah, he worked and began teaching Arabic and Persian, held their syntax and morphology lessons. Relation between Mahdum and Anvar was friendly. Mohlar-aim loved him as her own son, and comforted him when he was sad. "Do not worry, do not be sad, brave boy, – she said, – look at this beautiful girl, you will marry her!"

But Mohlar-aim failed to fulfill her promise: she had quarreled with Mahdum, and moved to the eldest son to Margilan. Leaving, Mohlar-aim worried about Anvar, she called her daughter Nigor and told her: "You will not find the son-in-law better than Anvar. When, God willing, Rano will grow up, marry her to Anvar."

14

THE TRUE FRIEND

In his childhood Anvar was a quiet and meek child. He rarely played with contemporaries; no one was a friend, and too rarely laughed. In his eyes there was always the same sadness. If we say that it was so because he saw little affection and joy with his own family, although his brothers were quite different. True, they say that one mother gives birth to different children; Anvar was not like his brothers. However, he changed since he lived in the house of Mahdum. He hadn't had any friendships with the guys

here, but loved Rano and made all sorts of fun for her. He used to walk with the girl in the gardens and referred to different flowers and birds, also went with her to the river bank, watching carefully so that she did not stumble and fell into the water.

When they happened to see a funeral procession and heard in the crowd felt sorry for orphans, having lost parents, Anvar said: "When my mother died, she also was carried on the street like that... and I, also like that boy walked behind the coffin to the cemetery and cried..."

Rano attentively listened to him and asked again questions, and Anvar did not bother to answer her. He tried his best to satisfy her curiosity.

Anvar was older and little bit serious, he warmly sympathized with the people in their misery. From early childhood, he loved flowers. Since he settled in the house of Mahdum Anvar took care of the flower garden, which occupied the large part of the garden. Anvar himself swept and watered it, and weeded it. He did not allow anybody to pick flowers, and when he saw that one of the guys picked off the flower, he got upset and scolded the culprit. With schoolchildren he procured seeds and seedlings of different flowers. Every year his garden grew and became richer. In summer, he instructed the boys to catch beetles and butterflies; who brought them alive and unharmed, he helped to prepare lessons. Butterflies and bronze beetles he let in his flower garden, and rejoiced when they sit on the flowers. In summer days over the flower bed of Mahdum flew swarms of white, pink, blue, dotted green and yellow-brown butterflies. Anvar spent all his spare time among the flowers and butterflies.

Anvar loved all inhabitants of the house, and treated everyone well. But he loved really only Rano, and his classmate, the boy named Nasim. Anvar and Nasim were very friendly, they understood each other perfectly, and shared thoughts intimately.

Nasim's father was one of the most influential persons in Kokand Khanate known throughout. By origin and wealth boys were far from each other as heaven and earth, but young friends did not attach any importance to this. Nasim did not boast that he was the son of the ruler of Khan's office, and Anvar was not shamed, smiling, he was the son of Salim painter, the adoptee of Solikh Mahdum. A stranger, seeing the two boys sitting side by side, talking with passion, would be surprised, but the boys did not feel.

On Fridays Anvar with Mahdum's permission spent the whole day with his friend. Nasim father's Muhammad Rajabbek also loved Anvar. Nasim told his father that his friend was an orphan, and probably because of the request of his son, Muhammad Rajabbek on holidays presented new clothes to Anvar. This arrangement of the noble man pleased Mahdum. This friendship with the son of the man like Muhammad Rajabbek bonded by expensive gifts was big luck. Because of the sight of these gifts, Mahdum even began to look at Anvar in different way, mentally said to myself: "It seems that there will be a sense of it."

Unfortunately, this friendship did not last long. The ruthless hand the Angel of death Jabrayil cut it off. At the age of fifteen Nasim got smallpox, at that times it could be treated, so the boy fell victim to ignorance of the time.

His death was heavy grief for Muhammad Rajabbek and his family. But it was harder for Anvar. We will not be wrong if we say that Anvar shed more tears than the parents. Three days, forgetting Mahdum and lessons, he stayed at the house of Muhammad Rajabbek. He sat for hours crying on the grave of Nasim. This hot affection of such loyalty friendship made all to amaze.

He wrote a poem on the death of his friend, it was his first experience in prosody – and it touched the parents of the deceased friend. We present several lines of these verses:

If a flower of youth dies – all are crying, old and small...
Not only people – a light sobs that he was gone.
Best of the best battled fierce sword angel of death.
Broke a young tulip. Life is precious faded.
Nasim left my land. Left me with a serious grieve.
Not the tears fall from my eyes – the blood streams of
scarlet...

Was in the whole world I have only one friend and comforter..

And I cry, orphaned – Desert tired Pilgrim.

Mullah Muhammad Rajabbek from this day was especially attentive to devoted friend of his late son. Cleverness of Anvar and his poverty forced Muhammad Rajabbek to think about his fate. Poems of Anvar devoted to the friend, were, of course, the product of childish, but there was something that caused a desire to take care of their destiny.

It began with the fact that two lines of these verses Muhammad Rajabbek ordered to inscribe on the tombstone on the grave of Nasim. And then Muhammad Rajabbek decided to show paternal concern for his son's friend Anvar, so that he did not feel abandoned and alone, unable to say: "There was a whole world I have only one friend and comforter, and I cry, orphaned in the desert tired Pilgrim. "

Within three weeks Anvar have been at home of Muhammad Rajabbek reading the Koran at remembrance night.

On the last night Muhammad Rajabbek asked Anvar:

- How is your teacher?
- Thank God, good.
- How is your teaching?
- well enough.
- You live in the house of his teacher?
- Yes, your honor!
- Are not you hurt there?
- No, your honor!
- Have you studied the Math?

- No, your honor.
- And your teacher knows the Math?
- I think not, my lord!
- If I give you to a teacher, do you want to learn the Math?
- Of course, if you allow my teacher.
- Let your teacher come to me tomorrow night.
- All right, your honor!

Next day Mahdum came to the house of Bek. Muhammad Rajab spoke with Mahdum that he thinks to take Anvar for the service to the palace, this requires a deeper knowledge of Arabic and Farsi languages use, but also mathematics. Mahdum first lost his mind from such goodwill to Anvar, but understanding the reason for this location, began to praise the noble for care about the poor orphan and profusely praised for talented youth. Mahdum didn't fail in all the difficulties and costs associated with education Anvar boasted that all the time knitting toils with Anvar's Persian and Arabic, and that Anvar was already writing essays in Persian. But with regard to the mathematics, Mahdum said, that he himself was ignorant, and therefore Anvar needed a teacher who gave him this science.

Rajabbek Muhammad replied that he would find a teacher, and let Mahdum go.

15

MAHDUM'S FORTUNE

Starting from this day a new page in Anvar's life has been opened. Now Anvar did not seem to Mahdum as an orphan and futureless man, but Mahdum now was sorry that Anvar was not his own son. To tell the truth there were some sorts of cases that Mahdum could be sorry for instance, if Anvar starts working at horde he will earn five

or ten golden coins every month. What will he do with this amount of money then?

So the amount of money was killing Mahdum now. Even though he thinks "I have been feeding and upbringing him since he was ten years old and I will have to get that money" Mahdum was not satisfied with his own thoughts now. Anyway the matter was very complicated...

Some time ago Mahdum was very angry with Mohlar Oyim's words about engaging Rano with Anvar, but now it was a very important issue for him. He started thinking that being an orphan was not a crime and a man needed fortune and future. And if fortune turns to someone the social position will not matter any longer then. Rano was a very beautiful girl. And Anvar would not reject her... "Money and lives should be joined, this is the final decision". – Thought Mahdum. About a month ago Mahdum told to Nigoroyim: "Anvar is getting older and it means you and Rano must keep distance between you and Anvar according to Muslim rules". But this order was not followed and it turned out now that it would not be obeyed in future as well. Because, according to Mahdum it could have put Anvar into a difficult situation...

Anvar began to be taught counting, essay writing by a Mufti appointed by Muhammad Rajab poygachi. Mahdum also started learning Arabic and Persian languages better. Anvar learned counting within a year. And he was good at other subjects as well. And starting this spring he began to work with Muhammad Rajab Munshiy at the Horde as a bookkeeper and a letter writer. He practiced about a year without any salary. But Muhammad Rajabbek gave him some money from his salary. And Anvar gave this money to Mahdum and Mahdum was getting tighter to Anvar.

During his practice at the horde Anvar learned all the documents, the Persian and Turkic writing styles¹⁴ and he became a complete, highly skilled mirzo. All the mirzos

¹⁴ All the documents were in Persian and Turkic then

were supposed to write down the words said by the head of Munshiys and write those words beautifully in letters and other documents. But most mirzos would be punished or insulted by the head of munshiy for their incorrect writing but Anvar was punished very seldom.

Anvar started getting seven golden coins for his salary in the second year of his work at the horde. Besides the salary he got a tax benefit. The tax benefit brought a great satisfaction to Mahdum's family, because the taxes and other payments collected by the khanate were so high that no one could pay them. But we will talk about it in other chapters of the book. Mahdum was happy twice: first of all he was no longer supposed to pay taxes and secondly he had been given all those seven golden coin by Anvar. It is really difficult to describe the Mahdum's happiness when he got the money. He was smiling continuously, his eyes were closed and his face changed and then he said: "Habba... you have got very good salary, my friend, but be careful with the money, Anvar!" When Nigoroyim heard about Anvar giving all the money to Mahdum she got very angry with him: "Anvar, I am very sorry for you. You have given all your money to Mahdum. You could have bought some clothes and other staff for yourself and the rest of money could have been spent on buying some clothes for your sister Rano. Your teacher will put them somewhere and that is all".

Mahdum now was both happy and sad getting seven golden coins. He tought that there were many bad people who could change Anvar's mind and Mahdum could lose his source of income then. That's why he wanted to engage Anvar with Rano. But Rano was only eleven years old at that time. Next day when Anvar came back from work Mahdum took him to the garden. Mahdum showed Anvar a place in the corner of the garden:

– Here I would like to build a house, terrace, and kitchen for you... Habba, Anvar? – he asked. Anvar smiled:

– You should have at least fifty golden coins for building. And I do not have any money. And whatever I earn is yours and Nigoroyim's till you bless me.

– Habba...I am shocked with your generosity! –cried out Mahdum, – Of course, but I want you to save some additional money for the other staff as well... for sure, it will take three or four years.

At that very moment Rano was holding a child at a distance. Mahdum called Rano and showed her the place as well:

– Habba... We will build a house for Anvar here, Rano. What do you think my daughter?

Rano did not understand her father's words:

– Anvar has got his own room to sleep, doesn't he? – she said.

– Hey, hey, hey, you are still a young girl, my darling, – said and laughed Mahdum, – Anvar is not going to sleep in that room forever, my darling, on day he will get married and you will have to get married too... so he needs a house.

Anvar got red having heard these words. Rano looked at Anvar and then she entered inside as if she got cross with her father. And Mahdum was able to give Anvar a very good lesson and poured the immunity against his enemies who could change Anvar's mind... this event also had an influence on Anvar. If Anvar has been looking at Rano as young thing and unachievable target now it was different she seemed to him as his fortune and bright future.

Mahdum was right about his thoughts and worry. "Good" friends started to show up beside Anvar now. And especially one of those "good advisors" was his uncle. Having heard about seven golden coins his uncle got interested in it. Nodira also started to give advice under her husband's command.

– Your uncle says that you should live with us and he wants to wed to someone.

But Anvar did not listen to his sister's words as he had not listened to the other's earlier. He told her that he would not leave Mahdum's house till he himself did not let him go and promised her that he would help them.

When Anvar asked for permission to buy some clothes for house wear from his second salary Mahdum told him: "it is a very bad decision, all right, but do not do it again!" Anvar bought clothes for Nigoroyim, Rano and himself. Nigoroyim was dressed in shopar and Rano in atlas.

Nigoroyim became very close with Anvar and started to give him various advice. She told him not to give all the money to Mahdum and keep some of it for clothes and other staff. She even said: "Rano's father will always take your money but will never give you or others in our family. That's why you should think about what you are doing now!" Nigoroyim knew that her husband could not shout at Anvar. Anyway Anvar kept giving his entire salary to Mahdum for six or seven months and Mahdum blessed him all the time. But even though now Mahdum's income was very high he did not change his character and kept being greedy. Every day soup was cooked and only some days they cooked pilaf. And when Anvar was late in the evening he would have cold pilaf. They were still having old bread brought on Thursdays. Mahdum never bought new bread. So in the end Anvar was to follow Nigoroyim's instructions. He preferred eating better things to giving out all the money and to be blessed. He bought meat and other ingredients and ordered any meal he wanted to have. He bought very good clothes to Nigoroyim, Rano and himself. He also bought clothes to his sister Nodira and his nephews; and he spent two golden coins on presents for Mohlar oyim who was ill in Margilan.

Having seen this change Mahdum got worried and asked: "You have spent some money this month, haven't you?" and Anvar answered him: "Yes, we have bought something we needed". In the second month he bought some

blankets and Mahdum was very anxious about the money so he gave him two golden coins and was blessed by Mahdum. But Mahdum was very worried about the situation. He thought that the enemy might have changed his mind. And so he would say *astofirulloh* many times. Now Anvar was having the same warm greetings and talks with Mahdum but he was spending his money on "tasteless" meals and clothes, so Mahdum was worried about it very much.

- Anvar, my darling, - said Mahdum one day, - The world is a very tricky thing; your life will pass away, but you should respect the money... If I keep your money it will be in a very safe place, my darling.

But this advice did not have any influence on Anvar, because he had already made a strong agreement with Nigoroyim and Rano. At the same time he kept giving two golden coins to Mahdum as well. People can get used to anything, so can Mahdum. He got used to getting two golden coins every month but every month he would worry about the rest of the money.

16

KHAN'S FAVOUR

During the third year of working at the chancellery as official mirzo Anvar gathered very huge respect. Especially, he was the best among other mirzos at Turkic editing: he had a very attractive style, easy word combinations and expressiveness. His talent was noticed by all mirzos, poets, muftis, and the head of munshis Muhammad Rajabbek and even by Khan himself.

Khudayarkhan used to listen to every document and letters which he was supposed to sign, he did not understand some of the words as they had been added from other languages such as Arabic and Persian and he would shout at munshi-

ys: "Have your mothers married to Arabs?" But he listened to Anvar's writings as if he was listening to good music he would say: "I guess this guy is the most educated one among all of you!" and other mirzos got worried with his words.

Lately Muhammad Rajab started giving the urgent and important documents to Anvar for editing. And if he went somewhere he left Anvar in charge. And he used to rely on Anvar very much. As Anvar carried out his tasks honestly and did not want to earn more money than his salary. At this very moment we would like to mention one of Anvar's characters: if you remember there used to be kazikhanas¹⁵ and the mirzos at those places used to ask money for "their service" and they turned a small thing into a huge problem.

And the mirzos at Khudayar's palace were the copies of those mirzos at kazikhanas. All the compains and other documents were supposed to be written and edited by the mirzos of the palace otherwise those documents would not be implemented. It means if the document had been written outside the palace it was not to be submitted to the khan or munshiy of the palace as the "payment for the service" had been given to an other man. They tore and threw it away and no one even noticed. If the submitter asked for the result they replied that it had been written poorly by an illiterate man so it was denied by the khan", and then they adviced him to rewrite the statement with more educated people. And people had to ask the mirzos of the palace to write the statement and pay for their service. Besides this, there were internal conflicts among the mirzos and they used to complain about each other and some of them had even been fired. In addition, some of the mirzos were in the secret service of khan and they used to tell the khan different lies to seem as a devoted man in front of him. Many people had been executed by those lies. So ordinary people were afraid of mirzos at the palace and they hated them but

¹⁵ Muslim courts

they greeted them warmly as they could do nothing about the situation.

Anvar, however, was an honest mirzo. He helped people and gave their complaints to the khan and he even tried to get good responses to the people's complains. So he became a wall with his honesty preventing the other mirzos from their deals with people and he became target for the other mirzos. But Anvar's sponsor Muhammad Rajabbek was very honorable man in front of the khan and so no one could do anything against Anvar then. There were both enemies such as old mirzo Shahodat mufti and friends such as Sultonali who appreciated Anvar's talent and intellect among the mirzos.

So he has been working at the horde as mirzo for five years besides the year of practice as the head Munshiy. Muhammad Rajab poygachi got ill and passed away. One of Anvar's closest friends did not exist any longer. Shahodat mufti has always been waiting for Muhammad Rajabbek's death and wanted to take his position, but that day he was out of the town so Anvar was carrying out the tasks of the head munshiy. So as the result there spread much gossips that Anvar was about to be appointed as the head munshiy. We cannot say anything about it now, because there were many honorable people, poets and scholars who wanted to get this position.

17

ANVAR'S WISDOM

Anvar shook his head to Shahidbek and Mahdum's words in an abstract situation and came back to the supa. Then Rano appeared at the entrance as if she had been waiting them to leave. She was holding her yellow headscarf with her hand as it was about to be blown by the wind. Having seen Rano in this situation Anvar stopped at

the flower bed of the garden. As Rano was approaching to him she kept looking at him sadly. She came up to the empty dishes on the supa.

– Anvar, I think you are satisfied with our meal today, aren't you? – Asked Rano turning to him.

– Yes, I am really satisfied with it, – Anvar replied and came up to Rano, – especially, I am very glad to have the mantis made by you.

Rano put the dishes back to the supa and leaned against the supa:

– How did you guess the mantis made by me?

– How did you guess? – Repeated Anvar and smiled, he had a flower in his hand, – I can guess, the mantis which had been touched by you, Rano.

– How did you like them?

– Do you think that I cannot recognize them?

– Yes, I do. I cannot recognize them.

– Do you think that I cannot recognize the manti made by you? They are always thick, square and pressed strongly. I have eaten only those which had been made by you...

– Did they taste good?

– Good is not enough, – said Anvar, – Do you remember the smell of this flower; it blossomed with its pink color for the first time when we planted them. Then they turned into red color after two years. Do you know why?

Rano did not understand Anvar's serious question:

– Perhaps they had been reddened by the Sun.

– You are wrong, Rano, – said Anvar, – I know the reason, the reason is you and your dark red lips...

– Stop making jokes, – said ashamed Rano – Why Shahid came here? Are they going to appoint you as head of mir-zos?

– Never mind, Rano, if you do not believe me look at the mirror. Is there any difference between your lips and this red flower?

Rano avoided from the flower pressed against her lips by Anvar:

- Stop joking... tell me are they going to appoint you as the head of mirzos?

- They are going to do anything they want... but it does not make any sense.

- Why not? Everybody in the town is talking about it, they say!

Anvar jumped onto the supa and sat there. But Rano stayed where she had been before.

- It is not true.

- They say that it is true. Perhaps you will be appointed to this post.

- Is it good if I am appointed as the head of mirzos?

- I do not know whether it is good or bad!

- It is bad, Rano.

- Why?

- It is a very dirty job. If I found another job, I would leave the horde forever.

- A dirty job?.. Your bek uncle also used to do this job, didn't he?

- But I cannot be him, Rano, I always worried about the innocent people who had been executed at the horde. And I am always sorry for them. And if I am the head of mirzos in that case I will be with those people. I will directly have connection with them. Perhaps I will have to participate in those events then, because I will have to do those things which are desired by the khan in order to seem to him as a good worker and it will serve me as the guarantee of long existence in this post. But I think I was not born for such kind of violent things. I cannot stand unfairness and cruelty, because the khan is not one of those who is able to listen to his soul. You know about your father's character, Rano. He likes only benefits. He does not understand why he avoided this job and tells me that I am a coward. Your father will

never understand the facts which I have mentioned to you, so I kept silence in front of him. I will always refuse this job even though it might seem like nonsense thing now.

Rano listened to him staring at his eyes. She was sorry for Anvar:

– If you received this offer with good thoughts, – she said, – And if you did not avoid helping people all the sins would be vanished from you, Anvar.

– Yes you are right, – said Anvar, – But it is not what I wanted to say, Rano, I wish about it. But others will never let me calm down. And I cannot calm down even now thinking that I am out of all the responsibilities. If an issue turns out to be totally different than you had expected you will certainly feel sorrow both mentally and physically. And this is the point. Otherwise getting rid of the responsibilities is a very easy thing, but spiritual lost is the hardest one, Rano.

Perhaps Rano understood what Anvar meant, so she kept silence for a while and looked at him.

– So, you do not want to become the head of mirzos?

– If they appoint me I will certainly receive it.

– Knowing so many difficulties will you receive it anyway?

– Because you father is asking me to do so.

– What does my father get?

After this question Anvar sighed and started at Rano for a while:

– He will get a very great treasure, – he replied and sighed again.

Rano did not ask him again. As if she also understood what Anvar meant. She started to take the dishes off the supa and looked at Anvar again:

– Would you like some tea?

– A little bit later.

Rano went away with the dishes. And Anvar kept staring at Rano while she was moving dressed in atlas.

- I am not going to go to the evening pray, Rano!
Rano stopped and looked at Anvar with a smile:
- I might come back! - she said.

18

A QUARREL AT MAIN ENTRANCE

There were only three men at the entrance of the mosque for the evenings prayer. There was a man with a dark black beard who was about thirty years old on the top side of the entrance. Next to him there was another "handsome man". And the third one was a man with long face and a white shirt and turban.

The first one was an esteemed young imam of the mosque Abdurakhman domla, the second one was a gossip-er of the makhalla Samad bukok and the third one was mu-ezzin of the mosque, Shukur sufi. Samad bukok and Shukur sufi would listen to the imam with a great appreciation:

- There are many wise and experienced people in the horde nowadays and I don't think this young, uneducated and inexperienced man will be appointed to this post. A man needs a huge practice and experience to cope with this job. But the man you are telling me about does not have enough experience as he had been taught by Solikh Mahdum and me. So I cannot even think about it...

- Yes..., - said Samad Bukok and he touched Shukur sufi's elbow, - he cannot cope with it for sure. He has just entered the horde with the help of Mamarajab Mirzaboshi... and Mirzaboshi made him his assistant as he was a very honest guy...

Imam was looking at the floor while listening to Bukok's words.

- I am telling these words according to the people, - said Shukur Sufi, anyway everybody is talking about this thing now.

– One cannot stop people talking about anything, can they?

When Samad Bukok screamed for the last time his veins under his throat came out. Imam was still looking at the floor shaking his small head:

– Maybe someone from horde spread this news to everybody to laugh at him.

– Yeees...

At this time the fourth man entered. This man was Safar weaver who about fifty years old with wide shoulders. He greeted the imam and then listened to their conversation a little and then interfered into it.

– I hope this guy will become the head of Mirzas, – said Safar weaver not knowing the mood of the conversation, – he is very good guy and cares for citizens: it would be better if he was appointed, wouldn't it?

Imam shook his head looking at the floor. Samad Bukok looked at Safar weaver with anger:

– Hey, you always bark like a dog. Safar, you do not even know what we are talking about, – said Bukok.

– So, what are you talking about?

We are talking about the gossip and we think that an experiences mullah should be appointed.

– Isn't he a mullah?

– Even if he is a mullah he is just an inexperienced one.

– You are wrong, Samad, – said Safar weaver, – If you see him writng letters and attitude towards the poor you will understand and like him very much.

– What has he done?

– He has done very many good deeds to everybody, – said Safar, – He even helped me.

– Well, well, well... so?

– Last year this time I took eight linens to the market – said Safar, – I do not know what happened then, perhaps someone betrayed me or the tax collector wanted to earn

something, anyway, he took my linen saying that it was for the tax so called zakot for a year. I tried to get my staff back but he did not listen to me. I could do nothing then. So I came back home sadly. Having seen me in that mood my children also got sad. I even did not want to work anymore. I could do nothing and the worst thing I had no money. I wanted to complain about the situation so asked some people an advice in the street. They told me that there was a man at the horde who could help me to write a statement. I took a piece of linen and went to his place. When I came to his house it turned out that he had just come back from the horde and was changing his clothes. He greeted me warmly. He was a young man. Nowadays it is very difficult to make mirzas listen to you but he turned out to be a very different man. He started to write the statement and asked me for the name of the tax collector but I did not know his name so I described him. I guess he wrote down someone's name to the statement and told me to go home. He said that I would get the result of the statement next day. I was supposed to come up to him...

– As you can see it was very easy to compile a statement, so I gave him the linen as a payment but he rejected it. I was worried it might be enough for him. So I told him that I would do something else afterwards. But he explained to me that I was not supposed to do anything for him. I was really shocked and went home blessing him. The next day in the evening when I was sitting in the yard of my house somebody knocked the door I told him to enter. A man with linen came in.

- Are you Safarboy?
- Yes, I am.
- Did you give statement?
- Yes, I did.
- What is your father's name?
- Mamatboy.

He put the linen in front of me. It was my yesterday's linen, all together: eight.

– Have you got your linen?

– Yes, I have.

– Good bye.

– Bye – bye.

I thought that this good deed had happened before the statement, by the head of mirzos. Listening to the people's advice I took linen and went to the mirza's house in the evening. I called him and he came out. I thanked and gave him the linen but he refused it. He said that he had two linens for making robe. Then I asked him whether I was supposed to sell it and give him some money but he replied that he had enough money to live on. He did not take even one of them. I blessed him again and went back home. I thought that even an angel cannot be more than him, Shukur sufi! So, who can be a head of mirzos instead of him now, Samadboy? They say that if many people pray for a man his dreams will certainly come true. If you don't believe me ask the imam!

Listening to the story the imam was getting somehow a little bit angry then. When the story was over he looked at Samad severely and Samad felt better for it.

– You have become a great liar, Safar, – said Samad.

Safar now changed his attitude and his face turned into pale as well:

– I swear!

– What an idiot would not accept two pieces of linen if you bring them to him for free? – said Samad. You have to learn to tell lies first, Safar!

– I swear, he did not accept them! – said Safar and he stood up with anger, – I swear I am not Muslim if I am telling a lie now in this mosque. And if you don't believe my words in that case you are not Muslims as well because I am swearing here!

Having noticed Safar's anger imam had to interfere in the conversation:

– Such kind of good deed can be done by anybody in our times, Mr. Safar, so I believe you, – said the imam. But now we have been talking not about his good deeds but whether he could cope with the job in the horde, I mean, whether he could become the head of mirzos as it's a very responsible job!

– Thank you, sir, – said Safar, – as for me he can cope with it for sure!

Imam could not understand Safar for a period and then he asked him:

– How do you know that he can cope with the job?

– I know it as Allah prompted me!

– Well?

– As I have told you already if many people pray it will come true of course!

– All right I agree with you, but has he got enough knowledge and experience for that?

– Yes, he has!

– How do you know about it?

– And how do you know that he hasn't got enough knowledge?

– I know it, because a man who is going to be appointed to such kind of post should at least study at the madrassahs of Kokand or in Bukhara. But he can only read and write nothing more, – said imam trying not to show his anger.

– How do you know about it?

– I have taught him... he was just an orphan then.

– It also depends on Allah, sir, you have studied in Bukhara for many years and now you are just an imam at this makhalla, – said Safar without thinking, – And he is going to become a head of mirzos without studying at the madrassah. As you can see everything in this world depends on Allah!

Having heard these words imam's face got pale and his eyes got red with anger.

– You are a stupid man! – He said.

– And you are also a stupid mullah! – said Safar weaver.

When imam wanted to beat him, Safar Samad stopped him.

– You are an idiot! How you dare to tell him such words?!

– said Samad.

Safar weaver stayed where he was:

– Stop talking, Samad, and let your mister fight with me! Do you thing that I am a coward?! – said Safar.

Shukur was about to stand up and imam was pushing Samad as if he wanted to attack Safar. And Samad was able to gossip only and he perfectly knew that he would not be able to help imam if the fight began.

– Do you still want to pray behind the imam afterwards?

– asked Samad.

– Will I be free if I do not pray with you?

– If you do not want to pray go home then!!!

– Well... – said Safar weaver and left the entrance. Imam said “He is just an idiot!” and then went to his place. Three of them kept silence for some time.

– He is just a barking dog, sir, don't get angry with him!

Imam said nothing. When some other people joined them Shukur sufi called for prayer on the Mezan, then they entered the mosque to pray.

19

A DIRTY HISTORY

The Imam got sad very much. He did not speak to anybody before and after the prayer. He was thinking about Safar's words now “You have studied in Bukhara for many years and at last you have become an imam to

the makhalla. Allah did not let you become more than this". These words were like a knife stuck in his heart.

To tell the truth these words really reminded the imam his dirty and severe past. And his past has just been hurting him for a long time inside but now the words pumped out the anger outside him. Safar disrespected him in front of Samad and Shukur. This thing was one point. On other hand the words said by Safar "and he is going to become a head without any education at madrassah..." were the worst of all. Which means the imam got very angry he was like a man on a fire now.

Why did he try to prove that Anvar was illiterate, inexperienced and he did not deserve the post of head of Munshiy then? Why has he argued with a "stupid" man like Safar and disrespected himself and got angry with it? Even if he wanted to honestly describe Anvar why would he do it in front of an illiterate man like Safar? Before I tell you the reason of it we would like to look through imam's past a little bit, because without it we cannot satisfy our reader.

Imam Mullah Abdurakhman used to be called simply "Rahmon" about twenty years earlier. Abdurakhman's father came from Ulama's dynasty but his father could not keep this title for some unknown reasons. But Abdurakhman's uncles continued their dynasty's traditions and they studied at Bukhara madrassahs. They were teachers at madrassahs in Bukhara. When Abdurakhman was a child his father passed away and he was brought up by his mother and his relatives from his father's side. He studied at Solikh Mahdum's school till he was fifteen years old and then he got a letter from his uncles in Bukhara. It was an invitation to study at madrassah in Bukhara. The letter said that he was from the teacher's family and he was supposed to become an educated man and it would be useless if he tried to do some other profession. His mother and other relatives liked this offer and they decided to send him to Bukhara to study

at madrassah. So, Abdurakhman went to Bukhara thinking about becoming a mufti or a teacher in future. His elder uncle was a teacher at "Khoja Porso" madrassah in Bukhara and Abdurakhman was taught by him. Abdurakhman was a smooth guy and other students at the madrassah liked such kind of guys... according to it his uncle did not want him to live at the madrassah so he placed him to his house. So Abdurakhman started to study in Bukhara.

His uncle knew that the world was "very dirty" then so he used to control him very strongly about that stuff. But what could he do anyway? All the teachers at those times were very "dirty" themselves and they were the one who would do such kind of dirty stuff. They all used to harass the other students even though they came from the prophet's dynasty. If someone however wanted to do that stuff with their own children, they would be very careful about it and would not let it happen!

So, his uncle would very strongly prevent him from other people, no matter they were young or old. He even used to lock the door in the evenings and would not let him go to the meetings with students and teachers.

A man should be honest himself anyway if he is not in that case it will not make any sense to teach him and prevent him from dirty stuff. So if a society gets a disease, it will hurt the entire country and all the levels of the society. No matter how strong the teacher tried to protect his nephew from dirty people, he was not on the safe side. There were many people outside the madrassah who wanted to have Abdurakhman as well. So the teacher now could do nothing about the people outside the madrassah.

When the teacher was controlling Abdurakhman as we have mentioned above some gay traders had already had an affair with Abdurakhman. The teacher would never let Abdurakhman stay alone, he used to lock the door in the evenings and go to bed after him and if there were any par-

ty somewhere he would take Abdurakhman with him. How could people have any affair with him in this situation? But anyway he had been used. Some gay traders who had mastered sleeping with boys had a special methods and ways of getting him out of his uncle's place. And they had had an affair with him.

When his uncle went to bed a small clot used to be thrown to the small gate and it would give a sign to Abdurakhman that he was supposed to get dressed. Then he opened the gate and a lasso was thrown into the house through the gate. Little Abdurakhman would band one side of the lasso to the gate and another side to his waist and climb down. Afterwards he would hide the lasso there and go to the party with the man who had been waiting for him outside. And there he would be treated as an Emir of Bukhara, whatever he wished would certainly be fulfilled. And the people there used to say:

"Oh, Mullah Abdurakhmanjan, your honesty, I will sacrifice myself for you!" After these words "Little Abdurakhman" had done anything he liked: he poured the alcohol, he dressed in sixteen year old girl's clothes; he touched the tea with his lips and make it "holy tea"; he danced under the music of tanbur and dutar¹⁶; he beated the men there with his hair like a cruel guy and in the end he... in short you know what would happen, then but we think that is enough for the description of Abdurakhman in this chapter.

He has been doing such kind of staff for three years when at last his uncle found out. His uncle could not stand it any longer so he turned Abdurakhman out of the house and home. Then Abdurakhman begged his uncle to let him stay at least at the madrassah. In the end he let him stay there. And now it was the people's turn to have him at the madrasah. He was used by people for two more years then he got

¹⁶ Tanbur and dutar are the national music instruments of Uzbek people

older and his beard started to grow and people did not want him any more. So Abdurakhman was "brought up" among traders for three years and he came of age among people at madrassah within two years. He was used to being treated greatly and warmly so he could not take his state without his clients. This situation was killing him now. He tried to return to his teenager times again and so he even shaved his beard with tweezers and he would look at the mirror every day and go to the markets and roam in the streets to find a client...

As is known, such kind of gay boys first of all will be used by the rich and high levels. When they get bored they will go to the group of middle class people. At the end on the third stage of their lives gays will have an affair with the lowest levels of the society. So the same thing happened with our Abdurakhman. He started to live with the lowest level of the society now. And we cannot describe his third stage of his life. He lived with them for about three years. Then he had to say good bye to his gay life as he now had so thick beard that nothing could eliminate it.

20

AWARENESS

Now Abdurakhman could not imagine how his future was going to be as well as his past did not make any sense to him. He lived sadly, spiritlessly and even he taught his lessons in vain. He looked like a man who was recovering from alcohol. He continued living like this for some time and one day he returned to the normal life suddenly. He seriously started to work at understanding the gist of "Aqoid".

During his period of sadness, he used to think about his honorable past where whatever he wished would come true. And now he wanted to get this honor back again. But

now he wanted to obtain it not with the help of tweezers but with the assistance of religion. He wanted to cover his past with the mask of religion. He would like to become a religious scholar who wished to prove that Allah was one. He started reading and learning books and he continued it for five years in hujras¹⁷. He got very thin and pale. And when he was twenty eight years old he was able to finish all the books. After five years of hard work his teacher forgave him for his dirty past. He even spent some money on Abdurakhman's graduation party.

Mullah Abdurakhman was getting ready for the journey to Kokand. He was thinking about becoming an honored teacher, mufti, judge and expert on shariah. He supposed that his relatives in Kokand were also getting ready for his arrival.

So, mullah Abdurakhman went to his hometown. Even though the entire Kokand did not come to meet him but anyway some of his relatives and neighbors from his makhalla were waiting for him at his house. This ordinary meeting was the first strike to his dreams. He came back home. He rested for several days. But he was not satisfied with it either. On the contrary, he got angrier, because those who visited him were mainly his relatives, friends and learners from madrassahs and imams from his makhalla. Those such as teachers, muftis, religious scholars and beks whom he had expected did not come to see him. And this was the second strike on his dream.

He thought, perhaps, they did not have time to visit him so they would invite him to a party at their houses. But unfortunately it also turned out to be just a dream. And he thought that might be his relatives would throw many parties for him and he would go from one to another and enjoy them, but this dream also was in vain. And this was the third strike.

¹⁷ A small room designed to study or in other words an old styled classroom (study)

A month later the parties also came to their end and he had to stay with his widowed mother. He could not even become an imam of the neighboring makhalla let alone his dreams in Bukhara of becoming a teacher or secretary at madrassah.

People wanted to appoint him as the imam of the mosque which was located two quarters from his house, but some objections were made for that too. Some religious people said that mullah Abdurakhman was not married and it was impossible to appoint him to this post because he avoided one of the rules of shariah. Then some of his friends decided to marry him off. His dreams in Bukhara were completely ruined and he was appointed as the imam of the makhalla promising that he would get married soon. Now there was a need for such kind of lowest post...

Mullah Abdurakhman's matchmakers first went to Solikh Mahdum's place asking for his daughter, Rano, because Rano's beauty was very famous in this region and secondly, Abdurakhman saw young Rano when he used to study at Mahdum's school and besides, it would be very great if a young scholar married to the old teacher's daughter. He would certainly score with it. Especially, when mullah Abdurakhman heard that Rano was still unmarried he considered it as his luck. Thinking that Rano might have got more beautiful than she used to be he started to hug her imaginary body without waiting for the wedding. He thought that his level in the society was higher than an ordinary school teacher, that's why he believed that he would certainly get married to Rano. But his fate cheated him this time as well. But the matchmaker came back with Nigoroyim's apology only, she had told them the following: "Our daughter is still very young, she is only twelve years old..."

Mullah Abdurakhman did not believe the matchmakers, so he sent some old people from the makhalla to Solikh Mahdum as matchmakers. But these matchmakers

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A month later the parties also came to their end and he had to stay with his widowed mother. He could not even become an imam of the neighboring makhalla let alone his dreams in Bukhara of becoming a teacher or secretary at madrassah.

People wanted to appoint him as the imam of the mosque which was located two quarters from his house, but some objections were made for that too. Some religious people said that mullah Abdurakhman was not married and it was impossible to appoint him to this post because he avoided one of the rules of shariah. Then some of his friends decided to marry him off. His dreams in Bukhara were completely ruined and he was appointed as the imam of the makhalla promising that he would get married soon. Now there was a need for such kind of lowest post...

Mullah Abdurakhman's matchmakers first went to Solikh Mahdum's place asking for his daughter, Rano, because Rano's beauty was very famous in this region and secondly, Abdurakhman saw young Rano when he used to study at Mahdum's school and besides, it would be very great if a young scholar married to the old teacher's daughter. He would certainly score with it. Especially, when mullah Abdurakhman heard that Rano was still unmarried he considered it as his luck. Thinking that Rano might have got more beautiful than she used to be he started to hug her imaginary body without waiting for the wedding. He thought that his level in the society was higher than an ordinary school teacher, that's why he believed that he would certainly get married to Rano. But his fate cheated him this time as well. But the matchmaker came back with Nigoroyim's apology only, she had told them the following: "Our daughter is still very young, she is only twelve years old..."

Mullah Abdurakhman did not believe the matchmakers, so he sent some old people from the makhalla to Solikh Mahdum as matchmakers. But these matchmakers

came back with worse answer than previous one: "Soliikh Mahdum had already engaged his daughter with a guy from horde by name Anvar. If he hadn't engaged her with him he would have married his daughter to Abdurakhman".

Having heard this answer Abdurakhman got thoughtful and started to hate his own fate. But at the same time hatred appeared in his soul towards Anvar as well. He wanted to check whether it was true or false so he started to learn about Anvar. He did not just find out that it was true he even remembered him: he was an orphan who used to study at Mahdum's school when he was leaving for Bukhara. He found out that he had been working as mirzo at horde and getting some amount of golden coins as his salary... After this "investigation" by Abdurakhman he got angrier than before. He was a "great scholar" who had studied in Bukhara and it was too hard for him to become an ordinary imam in a makhalla, but a villain and orphan guy had become a Mirzo at the horde and was getting lots of money and thanks for his occupation he had a chance to get married to such a beautiful girl as Rano. It was very difficult for Abdurakhman to hear...

Mullah Abdurakhman started to work hard as imam. He did his best. He told his people religious stories and tried to stop them from bad things. He especially would do it after and before Friday prayer. And he even managed to gain his honor among people. He just wanted to become famous and people stated to come to listen to his stories from other neighboring makhallas as well. Mullah Abdurakhman was very happy to see that. If he saw people belonging to the khan, he changed the topic about paradise and hell to obeying the khan and respecting the beks. He tried to be more at the khan's side than people's side. Even though his efforts did not help him too much. It turned out to be very helpful for him. One of his listeners who was a trader and

respected him very much. married his daughter with him. As now he was the son-in-law of a rich man he began to deal with other rich people of the town. And thanks to their parties he got introduced with some teachers of madrasahs. In short, he became more respected man. Only if he could get closer to the horde now...But still it was impossible for him.

As you already know the imam was angry with Anvar. And this anger was hurting the imam very much as Anvar was about to be promoted.

- This stupid Anvar is going to become the head munshi instead of being fired from the horde.

An honest discussion is usually just a discussion nothing more. But bad thoughts in many cases embarrass the man. Similar to this Mullah Abdurakhman, also added some bad thoughts into his discussion and this was the reason of Safar weaver's curse towards him.

So, he was angry with Anvar. At the same time, he was unable to do anything to Anvar. Perhaps, you might say "Now our imam has married to another girl and there is no point to be angry with Anvar about Rano. But this is very simple thinking. Actually this anger was connected with Rano, but now he was thinking differently. Do you ask me why? For instance, Safar weaver was very right saying: "You have studied in Bukhara for many years and could become just an imam in the makhalla, but he is...

The anger which was supposed to get its end already was still awake because of these words "He has become such a respected man even though he has never been to Bukhara". If you are an ordinary man you will also think like Safar weaver and say "it all depends on Allah" and you will not understand what was meant. It is, of course, very difficult to understand the people like Abdurakhman and it is better not to try.

THE CEREMONY OF ANNOUNCING THE DECREE

Everybody at the Horde realized who was going to be appointed to the post. All the Mirzos and other clerks of the palace were coming up to Anvar who was doing his usual work and they were congratulating him on the new work. But Anvar was accepting these congratulations simply and was not paying any attention. He was busy with his every day job which was classifying of the letters and complaints. So he was preparing the documents for submission to the hudaychi¹⁸. Besides this, he submitted some of them to the mirzos and muftis who were sitting in the first room.

There were two other letter writers besides Anvar in the head munshiy's room. These two kept silence and were busy with writing on a sheet paper in pencil. One of them was Shahodat mufti, his apprentice was also submitted to the khan. The other one was famous mirzo by name Kalonshoh who wanted the poet "Madhiy" to become the head munshiy.

There were about fifteen mirzos in the first room and all of them had their own character. Some of them were like Sultonali mirzo who was very kind and polite and some of them were like Shahodat mufti who looked like an angry man. And Anvar was having a look at these people while sorting the letters and other documents. Two people who were sitting in front of him were keeping complete silence.

- They started to laugh at me starting today, - said Anvar at last, - As if I am going to become a head munshiy...

Shahodat mufti put his pencil into the ink several times and said looking at the paper:

¹⁸ An occupation at the khan's palace

– Perhaps you will be...

– No, – said Anvar holding an application, – I did this work while you were in the village. I just wanted the work to go on. I cannot stand these people laughing at me, please, take this job from me tomorrow.

– I don't think that it is a humiliation, – he said covering his anger, – You are young and workaholic... But we have done such kind of job for a long time...

– Of course, – said Kalonshoh Mirzo looking at the paper who was sitting next to the mufti, – And don't listen to the humiliation.

Anvar was thinking that the congratulations were honest. But he described it as "humiliation", because he wanted to get rid of the uncomfortable situation there and reveal the others. But Kalonshoh Mirzo's words put him in difficult situation again and he was unable to say anything to him. At this time the khudaychi appeared at the entrance of the first room and called Anvar:

– Mirzo Anvar!

Anvar stood up taking the application sorted for khudaychi:

– The applications are ready... I was about to go to you now.

Khudaychi shook his head:

– Forget your application now, – he said and pointed to the land, – You come with me.

– Where are we going, sir?

– To the khan's reception.

The Mirzos looked at each other. Shahodat Mufti looked at his partner sadly. And Anvar was surprised with the letters and application in his hands. Khudaychi shouted at Anvar once more:

– I am telling you, Anvar.

Anvar put the things in his hands down and followed the khudaychi.

The khan was sitting on the throne. On the right side there was Abdurakhman oftobachi¹⁹ and on the left side there was Mullah Niyoz. They were clasping their hands. There were two executioners holding pole axes at the entrance to the khan's reception in the first room. Then the khan's respected retinue – clerks and beks of the palace were sitting in a row.

Khudaychi came into the reception and bowed...

– Have you called him? – Asked the khan.

– Yes, sir.

– Invite him.

Khudaychi went out and called Anvar inside.

Anvar stopped at the entrance of the reception and bowed and then he bowed to other people there.

– How are you, Mirza? – asked the khan.

– Yes, everything is all right thanks to your blessings, Anvar replied.

Khan looked at mullah Niyoz:

– This guy seems to me very clever among our mirzas, – he said.

Mullah Niyoz nodded.

– Whatever you say, almighty.

– I want to appoint this guy to the post of head of mirzas, – said khan and took a piece of paper and gave it to Niyoz, read it.

Niyoz stood up, took the paper and kissed it, Abdurakhman oftobachi and the others in the first room stood up.

Niyoz read the paper standing:

"In the name of Allah. Whatever Allah says and we order will come true. I am the Khan of Fergana Sultan Ibni Sultan, A'ni Sayid Khuydayarkhan say the following: this is my third time on the throne and today is the 25th day of the second month of the moon's year, 1872. We give this decree to Anvar from Kokand. From this day he will obey our orders and

¹⁹ Oftobachi is a respected post in the horde of khan

will carry out the job of head of Munshiys. We order him to be honest and listen to the citizens of the country and not to betray our motherland. We expect he will avoid lies and dishonesty. He will spread our tolerance and honesty all over the country. So we give it to him."

Having finished reading the paper Niyoz put it up and gave it to Khan.

Khudayar took the paper and then gave a sign to Anvar who was bowing and looking at the floor. Anvar ran towards the khan, took the paper, put it onto his turban and went back to his place.

Niyoz started praying on behalf of Anvar:

– We wish that there are no enemies of our khan and wish him a long life. We also wish him more wealth. Let him reign upon us for many years, oh Allah! Amin!

During the pray the people in the front room started to cry and in a crying tone said "Amin, amin". After the pray Khudaychi brought two robes. He gave the brocade one to Niyoz and black velvet one to Anvar as the sign of his new occupation. Having dressed up in the robe Niyoz started to pray for the Khan again and said up many good words towards him. After that the ceremony ended and Anavar went out slowly and entered the first room. There he was congratulated on the new post and then he went into the corridor.

When Anvar approached the Chancellery all the Mirzos and Munshiys stood up to congratulate their new boss. Now there was not any "misunderstandings" as before and even mullah Shahodat mufti was pretending that nothing had happened previously. He also stood up to show his respect to Anvar.

– Congratulations! Congratulation! Well done, mirzo Anvar! – He said.

We would like you not to be surprised with the changes in some Munshiys, the reason for change is very simple and

open. The post of the head of Munshiys is the boss of all the muftis even such as Shahodat Mufti as well. So, from this very moment their fate was in Anvar's hands.

Anvar felt uncomfortable with both honest and fake congratulations. He took the paper from his head and looked at the Mirzos around him in surprise:

- According to the Khan's order, - said Anvar looking at them, - I had to take the hardest and the most responsible job. When I took this job I did not believe in myself, I was thinking about you all, I think that you all will help me with this difficult job and I will not be ashamed in front of others... I have been brought up by you and you all treated me as your student. Even though today I have become your official boss, nevertheless you never mind it. I want you all to treat me as you used to do before and talk to me without any honorable words, because simple treatment is the sign of closeness and friendship.

- We haven't appreciated you because of Muhammad Rajabbek, we have respected you for your talent, and we will respect you not for your post but for your character. - said Sultanali Mirzo.

Mullah Shahodat Mufti looked at Sultonali secretly and smoked nos²⁰. Then he took his seat again.

- You always embarrass me with your hyperbole, Mullah Sultonali, - said Anvar, - I say again if you want to respect me, please, treat me as your relative not as your boss.

After saying amin everybody took their seats again. Anvar was taking off his velvet robe when Sultonali came up to him:

- Anvar, it would be better if you go home now.

- Why?

- I guess a public crier will go round town to announce the decree. And people might come to congratulate you...

²⁰ A tobacco which is smoked throwing it under one's tongue. It is usually in dark green color and powder.

– First of all, I don't have my own house. Secondly, I don't have anybody who could congratulate me, – said Anvar, – You may not worry about it.

– You are too young, Anvar.

Anvar smiled instead of answering and carried on looking through the applications.

22

THE "TRAGEDY" OF HOT BREAD AND ADRAS²¹ ROBE

During the second hour of the news about Anvar it spread all around the town. The public crier of the horde stopped at every market and work places and said:

– Everybody who does not know be aware about the following:

The old Munshiy Mullah Muhammad Rajabbek has passed away! And the new one has been appointed instead of him and it is Mullah Mirzo Anvar!

Those who thought that yesterday's news was just humiliation and laughter, today's real news was shocking: "What nonsense?! Such a high appreciation towards a villain!" But the poor and shoemakers had their own thought about it "whoever he is, he should be honest and polite!" with these words they were expressing their expectations. But those such as Safar weaver who had already come across Anvar were very happy saying: "He deserves it. He is a very good worker!"

Even though Mahdum had been expecting this news, anyway he was still surprised. He asked the guy who had come to tell him the news and ordered his students to clean the sitting room. He let the other student go home. He entered inside and called Nigoroyim who was teaching the girls:

²¹ Type of material. Kind of silk covered with colored stripes.

– Hey, – he said, – A messenger came from Anvar, open the trunk!

Nigoroyim did not catch Mahdum's words, said in a hurry.

– Who is that messenger? Why has he come? And why should I open the trunk?

– You are crazy, – said Mahdum, – Anvar has been appointed to the post, and the guy came to tell the news, and I want you to open the trunk to find something to give to the guy as a present. Be quick!

Nigoroyim also started to get into the rush. She went into the room and was looking for the key and Mahdum was shouting at her. As she could not find the key, in the end, Mahdum lost his temper and went out and called Rano among the girls.

– I have found it! – Nigoroyim shouted.

Mahdum came in again. Nigoroyim opened the trunk and asked him:

– Which robe should I take?

– Take the linen one! The linen one!

At this moment Rano also entered. Mahdum smiled looking at his daughter:

– It is your fortune, my dear Rano, your brother Anvar has become the head of munshiys.

Rano turned aside and asked:

– Why did you call me?

– I wanted to know whether you knew where the key to the trunk was, but we have found it already.

Nigoroyim took a linen robe out of the trunk and showed it to Mahdum and asked him:

– What do you think?

– All right, give it to me.

– Are you going to give this robe to the man from horde?

Rano also objected to the linen robe:

– You cannot give it to him, it is a shame for us!

Mahdum started to think:

– In that case, – He said hesitating, – Find an older adras one, – Nigoroyim took an adras robe and gave it to Mahdum. Mahdum observed the robe in the light:

– No, adras is for vain, Rano, – he said putting the robe back, – Give me that linen one.

– It is better to give nothing than this linen robe, – said Rano with anger, – Will you embarrass Anvar with such kind of thing?

Nigoroyim also agreed with Rano:

– We must not get embarrassed, Rano.

– It is for him! – said Mahdum looking at the adras robe. He was not in a hurry now instead he looked sorry about the robe. – It is in vain for him. It is so new.

– If it is new, never mind, – said Rano, – Anvar's respect is better than this robe.

– All right, – said Mahdum as if he was saying good bye to the adras robe, – Nigor, you let the girls go today. Make meals and tea. I think the guests will come in the evening to congratulate him. And you, Rano, wash your hair and be more attractive than now.

Having said these words Mahdum went out. Rano burst into laughter when Mahdum went out. Nigoroyim followed after her husband:

– Hey, Rano, – she said after her husband, – Our bread is very old, would you mind buying some from the market, – she said to her husband.

These words seemed very bad to him after the tragedy of the adras robe.

He stayed in the middle of the yard thoughtfully and he looked at his wife:

– Is the bread very old? – he asked.

– Yes, it is. You cannot even break it.

The answer was even worse. Now Mahdum could not even say “all right, I will buy some”. He just went out with-

out saying anything. He gave the robe to the guy who had been waiting for him in the sitting room. He stared at the robe till he went out through the gate, Mahdum did not even ask him whether Anvar was coming. He shouted at the boy who had swept without watering the yard with the words such as "idiot, barking dog!". Then he came into the sitting room and helped another guy to lay the kurpacha and punished him for not knowing how to do it.

– You, go to the gubar²², – he said to the boy when the place for guests was ready. – Find Sovur's bakery. Tell him "Mahdum needs twenty breads. – How much are they? Tell him that Mahdum wants to buy. Tell him to lower the price as I pay in cash... besides this tell him that new head of mirza's guests are coming from the horde... Run!"

He went to the yard having sent the boy to the bakery. Another boy has turned the yard into a mess pouring too much water. He shouted at him again and then ordered him to water the street as well. Then he came in.

– You have to let your girls go home today, that's all right, – said Mahdum to Nigoroyim. – We knew that this news was about to happen why haven't you prepared the bread? You have enough flour for it, don't you? So, show me some of the old bread.

Rano took some bread out of the box according to her mother's words and gave them to Mahdum. All the breads were very old. Mahdum tried to break one of them but it was impossible. Rano was smiling. Mahdum tried for several times and then he also smiled.

– This bread has got really old, besides the weather is very hot, Rano!

Having heard these words Rano smiled wider. Nigoroyim also smiled:

– Yesterday when I told you that I wanted to bake some

²² A small lively place where people can find bakery, grocery, butcher and other things

bread you did not let me do it, – said Nigoroyim. – We can do something, but it is very difficult for Anvar. We cannot even give him better bread at least... I am really embarrassed in front of him.

– I have sent a boy to buy some new bread, – said Mahdum giving the old bread to Rano. – If you think that it is difficult for Anvar to eat the old bread you may bake some bread for Anvar only. You and I can eat old bread as well, it is not a problem for us.

Nigoroyim baked secretly bread for Rano and Anvar even though Mahdum did not let her do it. Only today there were two or three new loaves of bread left. Now Mahdum agreed to buy some bread and went out. He gave twenty sums to the boy and asked him to buy the best ones.

People who came to congratulate Anvar also noticed that he did not have any house or friends. On the second and third day Mahdum had to send the boy to Anvar and invited him home.

On that day many people came to his place from all the sides of the town. And even those who had laughed at Anvar's illiteracy came to bless him. They were the rich, teachers of madrassahs and others, because these people were the ones who used to agree with the people from the higher levels and it would serve them to keep their respect and honor. Anvar hated the rich and respected people and he appreciated the poor very much.

23

A WORD OF BOOK

It was a little earlier than evening prayer. Mahdum was seeing off one of the teachers from madrassah who had come to congratulate Anvar. They were at the gate. The teacher said good bye and then stopped for a while.

– So, mullah Solikh, I would like to tell you one more thing, – said the teacher. And Solikh Mahdum came up to him quickly. – I could not tell it to Anvar; for instance, if he needs any stories and other stuff he can tell me without any hesitation... Please, tell him about it.

– All right, sir.

– I hope you will not forget, wil you?

– Don't worry, sir!

Mahdum has been said such kind of things several times with many teachers and the rich that day so he was very tired of that. That's why he accepted the words said by this teacher as well as ordinary ones.

When Safar weaver was about to enter Mahdum's house with his linen turban he was stopped by Mahdum:

– Well, well, well, brother, – he said to Safar. – Where are you going?

Mahdum was very tired of the rich who came to congratulate let alone the poor. Besides he was annoyed by having to buy bread for the second time. Safar weaver turned round Mahdum at the threshold:

– Yes, sir? – he said.

– Where are you going to?

– I heard my friend Mirzo Anvar has been appointed to a new post, so I would like to congratulate him on it, – said Safar.

– That's very nice of you to come to see him, but you know, he is very exhausted now, so it would be better if you blessed him at your house.

Safar weaver was in a difficult situation and then he looked at Mahdum:

– I would rather go in and congratulate him, sir. That's all. Mahdum stood in front of Safar now:

– All right, but he will get sad.

– He is a great guy, he will never get angry with me, besides we are very close friends, sir.

Mahdum looked at Safar weaver with angry face. Safar also stared at Mahdum for a while and then smiled.

– You will see he is very polite to me, – he said again and carried on entering without paying any attention to Mahdum as he was used to coming to Anvar's place and knew where he lived.

Anvar was talking to Shahidbek and one more guy who looked like a military leader. He stood up having seen Safar in the corridor. They greeted each other as very close friends. Safar weaver congratulated Anvar with tears in his eyes. Anvar asked him to sit right next to him. And those two rich men just pretended to be praying with Safar.

– Don't you have any problems with the tax collector? – Anvar asked and smiled.

– Thank to Allah, everything is all right.

– How about the market and your business?

– So so... We can still earn money for living, brother.

At that time Mahdum's voice was heard who was asking someone in and so Anvar and Safar's conversation was interrupted. It was Mullah Abdurakhman; having seen Safar weaver who was sitting beside Anvar got pale and then he entered the room. And the beks who had not even stood up when Safar entered started to greet mullah Abdurakhman warmly. Mahdum introduced Mullah Abdurakhman to Anvar.

– Perhaps you might remember, mirzo Anvar, – said Mahdum, – mullah Abdurakhman used to study at my school when you first came to my house.

– Yes, I remember him. How are you, sir?

– Alhamdulillah, – said Abdurakhman and secretly looked at Safar weaver, – My congratulation on your new job.

– Thank you, sir, come in.

They all sat down. They greeted each other once more. And the coincidence was now very interesting. Mullah

Abdurakhman felt uncomfortable at this meeting. He was not even able to express his congratulation to Anvar and he constantly was looking at that "stupid" man. They kept silence for some time and then Anvar asked everybody to help themselves and Shahidbek began a conversation with Mullah Abdurakhman.

– What do you do now, sir?

– I am an imam, – said Abdurakhman and unnoticeably looked at Anvar, – We have been imam since we came back from Bukhara...

And besides I work at a madrassah as well...

– That's very nice; which makhalla do you work at as imam?

– At our makhalla, – said Safar weaver interfering into the conversation, – He is very clever man, he studied in Bukhara.

Shahidbek wanted to encourage Abdurakhman:

– That's very nice, – he said.

– I also heard that Abdurakhman was a very clever man, – said Mahdum.

Safar weaver started to talk again about Abdurakhman:

– Yes for sure, he is a very clever and good man but sometimes his fortune turns its face from him. Otherwise he could be a teacher at a madrassah, mufti or mirzo but he is unlucky man... Now maybe Anvar can find some job in the horde and support him. Besides, Abdurakhman has been praying for Anvar this week, haven't you?

Mullah Abdurakhman agreed with anything in front of Safar now. He looked at every participant of the party sweeping the sweat on his chin and then he cried out: – Yes, I have.

Mahdum thought that Safar weaver had been sent here by mullah Abdurakhman to help him out.

– Mullah Abdurakhman is on our side, – said Mahdum, – Of course, Anvar will help him.

– Sure, it would be better if he was appointed as Munshiy at the horde, – said another bek.

Anvar kept silence as he did not want to promise anything. And Mullah Abdurakhman was wiping his sweat from time to time. And Safar weaver was trying to catch Abdurakhman's sight as he wanted to give a sign as he had gotten revenge for the recent argument between them. They had been keeping silent for a while when suddenly the beks started to leave. The imam was afraid of Safar so he also desired to leave with beks. Safar also followed the imam, because he wanted to go with the imam and express his apology to him.

Having said good bye to Anvar, four of them went out together. They walked about thirty steps together and then Shahidbek turned into his street. And then after some time another bek also went in the other direction. Perhaps mullah Abdurakhman also did not want to walk with his "friend" Safar so he walked faster. But Safar followed him and stood on his way. The imam got angrier of this and stopped then he looked at Safar:

– Why have you stopped? Go on!

Safar weaver had taken three or four steps not noticing Abdurakhman stop:

– We will go together, sir.

– I do not want to walk with you! You may go on!

Safar stared at him not understanding what was going on?

– Why?

– You ask me why, stupid man?!..

– You had told me that the Muslim man cannot be angry with anybody for a long time, – said Safar, – And we have been cross with each other for four days already... I think this is enough.

– Astafirullah, – said the imam, – Try to remember what you did on that day?

– Yes, I know, sir, – said Safar, – Anyway, what I had said on that day came true today as you can see. I am telling you to stop being cross with each other.

Mullah Abdurakhman apologized and went on. And Safar weaver also walked with him slowly.

– Well, if you are not cross with me any more, why did you say so many things at Anvar's place again? – asked the imam.

– I said nothing but good things there. I praised your knowledge only.

– Didn't you say anything else?

– What did I say then? I told them that you were very clever and smart man, but just a little unlucky. Isn't it true?

– I did not ask you to tell Anvar to give me an occupation, did I?

– No, you didn't. But I don't want you to work at the mosque disrespecting your knowledge... You have to get appointed to a better job now with the help of other people.

– Astafirulloh... Maybe I prefer my present job to being king, how do you know?

– You don't say, sir, – said Safar weaver, – Forget that, tell me the truth. Who would object if a teacher from a madrasah had been appointed as a head of mirzos. That's why I told him that you had been praying for him for a week. You could have noticed my politeness to you from that.

– Astafirullah, have I even prayed for him? Why did you tell him a lie? – said imam again.

– You are still very young, sir, – said Safar and smiled.
– Would you be happy if I had told him that you did not want Anvar to become a head of mirzos? Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.... Of course not, I guess you have studied in Bukhara as well: the books advise to tell a lie in two cases; one of them is between husband and wife, and the second case is to reveal a real Muslim. I was told it by my teacher who had already passed away. So I kept these words in my mind. I followed the books and told lies to make two Muslims friends.

Mullah Abdurakhman could not say anything again, because Safar weaver defeated him with the word "book". They came to their makhalla. Safar weaver had already forgotten his anger. He entered the mosque to pray behind mullah Abdurakhman. There were many people who had been waiting at the entrance and Samad and Shukur were among them. Samad was surprised to see Safar entering the mosque together with the imam, so he asked him:

– Have you reconciled?

– Anger should be forgotten immediately, – said Safar weaver, – We are coming back from the new head of mirzo's house. Have you heard the Mirzo, I told you, has been appointed to the post?

Samad said nothing, he just turned round and left. Shukur sufi started to call for the evening pray.

24

POET'S SECRET

Mahdum's sitting room has been turned into the official office for the past fifteen days. Anybody who was about to submit an application to the horde first consulted with Anvar, even official authorities had done it. In the daytime Anvar worked at the horde as the manager and in the evenings he started to receive private clients. It was very hard for Anvar, of course. But this hardness was supposed to happen to anybody who was appointed to this post, that's why Anvar was to receive people at his house. It was not hard to solve the poor's problem, but the rich's matters usually were complicated. The poor complained about very important issues such as: to permit him not to pay the taxes as he was very poor or about authorities. But the rich complained about another rich man or the tax collector complained about another one, or a trader could ask him

to free him from paying taxes as he was "very poor" and the trader usually promised that he paid any money that Anvar liked. Anvar was sick and tired of such rich people and he usually promised them to do his best in order to send them home.

Even though Anvar did not like these rich people, Mahdum on the contrary was very proud of the fact, and he even gathered them in his sitting room till Anvar came back from the horde. You have already read the story between Safar and Mahdum. Mahdum could not stand the poor like Safar, so when they came to complain or consult with Anvar Mahdum usually tried not to let them in, just told them: "Anvar will not come today. Please, go home, Anvar does not have enough time to talk to you". If Mahdum saw Anvar talking to a poor man he said "A poor man will be poor forever" and got angry.

Mahdum was trying to marry Anvar and Rano this day. But there were some reasons for this, as he perfectly knew that Anvar was getting closer with Rano day by day. The second very important reason was the fact that if Anvar and Rano got married Mahdum would not be able to take money from Anvar any longer.

When Anvar was appointed to the post of head of munshiy Mahdum started hesitating about continuing his previous "policy" concerning him. But now the situation was different: all the respected people of the town knew Anvar very well and any of them could marry off their daughter with Anvar. So, could Mahdum continue his old "policy"?

So, on the twentieth day since Anvar was appointed to the post, Mahdum had to consult with Nigoroyim about the marriage and they decided to tell Sultonali mirzo about it. Sultonali was supposed to tell Anvar and get his agreement.

Anvar was about to go back home from the horde. The Khan had already let his entire staff go home besides his permanent clerks such as guardians and night beks

were at the horde. Anvar and Sultonali also left the horde at last. And the gate of the horde was close after their departure.

Sultonali knew Anvar very perfectly only from his outside, but he did not know anything about his inner secrets such as his attitude towards Rano, because Anvar had never told anybody about his love to Rano. Sultonali thought that Anvar lived in Mahdum's house because he did not have his own house and besides he had been living there since his childhood. But he understood the truth a little bit when Mahdum came to his place one morning. Especially, Sultonali understood many things when Mahdum started to talk about the marriage immediately after the greeting. Mahdum told him that they were going to marry off Rano and Anvar and asked Sultonali to tell Anvar about it and get his permission.

They were talking along the road:

– I would like to give you advice: buy a horse, because it is not good for you to walk, – said Sultonali Mirzo.

Anvar smiled again.

– I do not need a horse, I have got my own feet which can serve me...

– All right, but it is not good any more.

– If it is not good now what if one day I quit the job? Will I be able to walk after that?

– Why will you have to leave the job? You will work here very long.

Anvar smiled:

– But I guess I cannot work here even a year...

If you are my friend you have to ask Allah that I must be fired from this job without any slander.

– You always panic without a reason, Anvar.

– Have you ever looked at Shahodat mufti's face and have you even noticed the poet's stinging remarks? If they get this post from me without any quarrels and slander, I

will be very happy... I cannot still understand why I have been appointed to this post as there were many volunteers who had been dying for it. I think this event will lead me whether to happiness or tragedy. And about the panic, it is less important...

– Neither Shahodat mufti nor the poet can do anything, I guarantee, – said Sultonali, – and you were supposed to be appointed to this post, because those two have been working for so many years and using too much slander and betrayal, so their secret is familiar to everybody in the town and even the khan is aware of it. So it was clear that Shahodat mufti could not be appointed to the post. And besides Burkhan has very bad relation with Shogovul, so even if the khan asked him to appoint Burkhan to the post he would never do it, besides everybody knows that Burkhan will turn the chancellery upside down. And you know about the poet by the nickname “Madhiy”. He is a womanizer and can praise the khan, besides only few people at the horde knew another secret of the poet for which he could not be appointed to the point...

– Well?

– Don't ask and calm down.

– Well, well?

Sultonali smiled and whispered:

– They say that the poet had an affair with one of the bondwomen at the horde...

– Well, so what is next?

– Another bondwoman who found out and told it to the khan. The Khan turned out the woman of the horde and then called the poet. The Khan greatly humiliated him and the poet had to beg for his apology for the last time. Then khan let him go.

– Anvar smiled:

– Do you think that it is the reason for not being appointed to the post?

– Of course. If the poet understands what is going on he would be very happy even for still working at the horde. As you can see you are wrong about being appointed. All right, even though you do not want to buy a horse, now you will have to when you get tired of walking. Anyway let's put aside the matter of the horse, I would like to talk to you about very important issue now: I think it is high time you get married.

– Are you kidding, Sultonali?

– No, I am not. You have to get married. You cannot make any objection to this issue, I guess!

– Anvar smiled:

– What if we leave the marriage aside too?

– Perhaps you will work at this post forever and you will be single your entire life, – said Sultonali and laughed out.

– Has anybody worked at the post forever? Of course not!

– There are many people who worked at the post till the end of their lives. For example: Muhammad Rajabbek; he worked at the horde as the head of munshiy since the period of Muhammadalikhan. I am telling you seriously: we will try to marry you off with any girl in the town you like.

– Thank you...

– I am serious, Anvar.

Anvar looked at Sultonali with a half serious face and he understood that he was expecting the reply from him:

– All right, I will consult with Mahdum and then I will tell you my answer, – he said.

– Mahdum came to my place this morning, – said Sultonali in a serious tone, – According to his words I understood that he was going to engage you with his daughter. But I don't know whether he wants to do it with or without your permission...

Anvar got red. He looked at Sultonali with an interrogative face instead of answering.

– According to Mahdum's words all the other staff had already been settled down, – said Sultonali, – He just wanted to know your opinion. And I told him that I would ask you about it.

Anvar smiled. But this smile was totally different from the previous ones as it was the smile of happiness.

– All right, – said Anvar and took about ten steps without a word. –Well, I will answer you tomorrow, now I would like to think about it first.

– Deal, if I meet Mahdum today should I tell him that I will answer him tomorrow?

– Of course.

– See you, Anvar.

– Bye bye, Sultonali.

They split down and went home.

25

LIFE LIGHT

Anvar has been excited for several years, because that was the subject of his constant dreams, at last it started to come true. The flower of love that constrained doubts so long, now revealed towards to the enamoured. For months and years, Anvar could take pleasure with its aroma. And so that not to receive this possibility, Anvar who lived for many years in that house, agreed on the service, taking out reproaches of sister Nadira: «And I rejoiced, I thought, that you will light fire in the house of mother again... Silly, Anvar, not caring of the destiny to fatten others».

Happiness understands everyone in its own way. For Anvar love to Rano was happiness. How it could light shine in the house of the father and mother when it was not in a spark life? He searched for it, and the love became this spark for him.

Other young men, caring for happiness, would build a house, adjust economy, sew dresses for wives. But Anvar at first wished to marry, and then to think of all the rest.

Having promised to Sultonali to give tomorrow the answer, Anvar was joyfully excited, and came home. Hastily having finished affairs with expecting him in hotelroom visitors, he has gone inside. It was conducted there by secret desire not simply to see Rano, but to read in her eyes whether she knows about the intentions of Mahdum.

Rano sat on verandah, stood by the column, and read the book. Nigoroyim was cooking supper. Rano frowned, saw Anvar coming to her. She smiled and hidden legs under a yellow satiny dress and threw on her breast fitted by the atlas long plaits. When he has come nearer, she has slowly looked away from the book and said: «It's impossible to get tired of you!» And then again inclined her face over the page. Anvar approached and glanced at the book.

– Omar Khayyam? – He asked and sat down opposite of Rano, having hang his feet from verandah. – Read, I will listen!

Rano closed the book and gave it to Anvar:

– You read, and I will listen.

– Read yourself, do not be lazy...

– And if I incorrectly read, you will laugh again as it happened before remember?

– Then you purposely read incorrectly so that I laughed...
Read, Rano!

She put the book on the ground.

– I became bored by reading this book.

– And I am asking, read for me! Rano nodded on a path conducting in the house.

– The father will enter.

– Why did you become so constraining?

Rano smiled, not answering and reddened. Anvar tried to turn the conversation to another way.

– Is the weather so hot? You are sweated, Rano?

– Rano wiped with a scarf the pearl droplets of sweat off her nose.

– It's not from the heat, – she told smiling. It's absolutely from another...

– And from what, tell?

Rano changed a little and said cheerfully:

– Since you became an important bek... As I see you I am becoming confused. I am even thrown into sweat with confusion!

– And I thought that you have already been ready to tease and sneer. It appears, still is not present. Well, what is further?

– Who will dare to deny power of the person whose name is the head of all clerks of his majesty of the khan?! I hope, you will allow your servant to call you so?

– All right, I allow, – Anvar said laughing and stood from the place. – If our servant is not confused any more, now we will state it to our command. Your servant is ready to execute your command!

– Whether it is necessary for servants to speak with the master while sitting? Answer at first this question before to carry out our command.

Rano jumped and, imitating servants, extended her hands on her breast, inclined her head and asked pardons.

– To think something is the peculiarity of a human.

Anvar was smiling in reply to the playful-coquettish tone of the young girl who played before his role, and he looked at her long, supporting the game, in the tone of the master has said:

– I will be on the supa. Take a minute and come to me, I need to tell something to you secretly!

Rano was continuing to play the role of the servants, and bowed, made the gesture meaning «she is ready for service», and, having caught Anvar's sight, she looked at him

magically... Hardly constraining laughter and admiration, Anvar turned and went to the exit.

Nigoroym still occupied in the kitchen, laughed too form the tricks of the daughter. But, having got used to this constant game between Rano and Anvar, she did not begin to extend in this occasion.

– The supper is ready, Anvar! – She told. – You will be on thr supa?

– Yes.

– The father was going to go somewhere after sunset prayer

– Will you eat your palov?

– Yes.

– If you see children somewhere, send them to me.

– All right.

Anvar went out thinking of where Mahdum would go.

The time of the evening pray has not come yet. The easy breeze silently moved flowers around the supa, and the sharp smell of basil suddenly struck his nose. The round dim moon lazily ascended in the sky, and its face cleared up gradually as the sun grew dim on its decline. From a pasture the herd came back to the city, so from everywhere sounds of cows and sheep and lambs were heard.

Anvar was sitting in the garden on the supa, being engaged in his office papers when Rano went up inside. It seemed that Anvar strongly had been occupied by work that did not notice her arrival. Rano silently approached Anvar, leaned the elbows on the supa, and propped up her palms under chin and began to look, how he was writting, when Anvar tenderly smiled at her.

Rano looked at him unwillingly dipped a feather into ink and wrote some more. Then he stopped with the feather in hand, reflected and again as earlier, with a smile looked at the girl. Their eyes have met, and some time they, smilingly, looked at each other.

- Why have you stopped, write!
- Your work is always like this, Rano!
- And what kind?
- Well, here... Always you come, when I am occupied,
and distract my thoughts from work.

- Did I disturb you? Write! I will look only like this.

Anvar turned to Rano.

- It is useless, all the same you have already stolen my
attention.

- I am not the thief of thoughts! All right, write! Anvar
postponed the used up paper and took at the blank paper.

- Now I will write absolutely something else.

- Well, write.

- And you will answer me, all right?

- All right.

- And if you, as it was the last time, do not manage to
answer, what then to make with you?

She sat on the supa, having lowered her feet.

- You can strike me on my face slightly. Only one condi-
tion: so that the thought and a rhyme were not so difficult.

- Well, - said Anvar laughing and, looking at Rano. She
reflected. Her eyebrows hardly shifted.

- It is not necessary to think long!

Instead of the answer Anvar dipped the feather into ink
and began to write:

If there is Shirin of Farhod, Layli of Majnun

I will have the flower of flowers, this Rano.

Watching words which have run from the feather of An-
var, Rano reddened, shook her head and turned away.

- Well, Rano, answer more likely!

A minute later, not looking at Anvar, then, having bent,
she took from him the feather, paper and asked:

- Won't you laugh?

- If you do not laugh over me, I will not. But on my cou-
plet you should give the exact answer, - as were trustfull.

Rano thought a little and, not showing Anvar, wrote:

Rano threw Anvar the paper, smiled and ran to the flower bed. Anvar became happy reading the answer.

– Good fellow, Rano!

Rano stood among flowers and seriously looked at Anvar.

– You too...

– No, I do not exaggerate! – Anvar told. – Here now you stand among flowers, and you – the finest flower among them, Rano! Look, I again write, prepare for the answer, Rano!

Rano again ran up and began to read, what he had written:

With alarm I thought time and again, that torments heavy love.

Having read the last line, Rano sank into thoughts. Anvar did not lower eyes from her thoughtful face.

– Is it difficult to answer it, Rano?

– Give me the feather! – Rano said with insult and stretched her hand. – Even you do not give to think!

She has written the answer.

– You won, you have won, Rano! – Anvar exclaimed. – But only the last line has an error...

– Really?

– The medicine says that bile is not spread but a person descends from mind, when his blood burns...

– But so that blood burnt, at first it is necessary so that the bile would be spread. While the bile will not spread, blood will not deteriorate... Well, will you write further or accept you win?

– I am defeated.

– And if I win, I wish to receive my prize!

Anvar substituted his face. Rano slightly struck his cheek.

– And if I have won you, – Anvar told regretfully, – I would not beat you on the cheek...

– And what you would do?

- Now it is useless to speak about it.
- No, tell me, suddenly it is pleasant to me, then my slap on the face is not counted – after all I have hardly struck it...
- No, you will not do that I would make...
- Why I will not do? Tell...
- You can not... Anvar laughed and said with comfort: – I will not strike you with my hand, but with my lips...

Rano was confused and looked down. She had the full basis to redden and look down as for the first time in her life she had heard, that it was possible to strike with lips on the face. Though she wrote verses about love and was enamoured such things were completely unfamiliar to her. And for Anvar these words were the first impudence in relation to Rano. Both of them were confused.

On the blue dome of the sky the evening stars were flickering, as lighted candles. The moon became brighter as if laughed at these two young beings that by awkward steps started out their new life.

The wind blew to each flower in the garden, as if speaking to these two young loves: «And you, like flowers, tend is more close to each other». She smiled to Anvar.

- Well, here I have come on your “command”!
 - On my command? – Anvar, also having smiled and directly looking at eyes of Rano said: – After the evening prayer...
 - What after the evening prayer?
 - You should come here on my “command”!
 - And now?
 - Now it is impossible.
- Rano with hurt looked at Anvar, rose and left.

**«WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT THE GROUND,
RANO?»**

The strong wind bent down all trees in the garden. In streets the dust has risen to the sky, the light of the moon and stars has grown dim. The wind muffled the crash of grasshoppers and cicadas. Vineyard lanes over the supa were shaking, hiding in shade, opening the faces who sat on the supa, as if playing with them.

Anvar picked up the grapes which fell near it and began to eat, he gave some berries to whoever sitting next to him.

– Help yourself, Rano!

– I will not eat.

– And I will not persuade you.

Rano picked up some berries and gave them to Anvar.

– Here take, if you like some grapes.

– Here it is good... You will gather for me all the grapes...

– What did you want to tell me?

– About what should we speak, Rano? All, as always, as usual, you know yourself... We will sit, we will talk... I have called you, so that you picked up for me grapes broken by the wind.

– Soon father will return after the evening prayer. If you do not have any deal, I will go home.

– The evening prayer has not come to the end yet, they have just called for the early morning prayer. If father returns earlier, we will quickly hide behind the flowers.

– And if father begins to search and find us behind the flowers, what we will do?

– Well, what? You will go to yourself inside, and I go to sittingroom.

– And what will we answer, if he asks, why were we hiding together behind flowers?

- Let's say that we just were sitting there.

- And if asks why you were hidden?

- We will say that you were confused.

Rano laughing, rose from the supa, and, having gathered the scattered grapes around her, gave them to Anvar.

- Well, all right, I've got business, I will go. The wind made me deaf!

- There is a couple of words to you! - Anvar said. - Return, I will say.

Rano approached him.

- Speak!

- Sit down!

Only she sat, suddenly the strong impulse of the wind threw a shawl from her head and stuck on the face of Anvar.

- Aha, the wind avenged me. Well, speak!

Anvar compressed the shawl in his hands.

- I will tell you only under one condition!

- Say your condition!

- You will not become angry?

- Well...

- You will not be confused?

Rano as if guessing about what a speech will be there reflected.

- Give me my scarf!

- Your scarf flew away. Do you accept my conditions?

Rano did not answer. Rano looked like fantastic-fine light of the moon. Rano's wonderful eyes were clear and pure, and understood his words, that Anvar wished to say so. Some time they both sat silently. The wind flew, amplifying, abating. Flowers with the force of the wind exchanged by bows with each other.

Anvar went to the depth of the supa, to the darkness. Possibly, words he was going to tell Rano, confused him.

People are born and grow, and when they grow, incorporate in steams. Not only people live in steams on the earth, also

nature, animals... Fallow deer in Mountains, parrots in woods, nightingales in the gardens, everybody live by couples. I do not know, what is your way, but I think, that the most important thing is that people should live and love each other... We with you since childhood, between us there are no secrets and there are no other people, devoted in our relations... Therefore, I think that nobody can forbid speaking to us frankly about all... If I am not mistaken, we sincerely love each other, and our hearts beat together. Or I am mistaken, Rano?

Rano looked at him and again looked down. Having kept silent, he continued:

– I do not know, whether you heard or not, but it is resolved to engage us, today I was asked to appoint the day of the wedding, and I promised to answer tomorrow... For this purpose I called you here, wished to talk to you, so that I could answer tomorrow... Why are you looking at the ground, Rano?

Rano silently raised her head, smiled and turned from him her face.

– Whether you are confused or not, all the same we will marry. Your late grandmother Mohlar demanded it. If you say, that you do not want, that our relations changed, I will answer them. Speak Rano?

– Let all remains, as it was, – told Rano, even more having turned away, – Who are we bothering?

Words of Rano removed the weight from Anvar's shoulders.

– Certainly, our relations are not in a burden, except to us... You speak, that all remains, how it was, till the time it will continue? We should appoint any term, Rano.

– Till our old age...

– Means, till old age?

– Till death...

Anvar burst out laughing and drew near Rano. He put the hand on her shoulder, as though wishing to turn her to look into her eyes.

– Look at me, Rano, and tell me the truth!

Hot breath covered her ears, Rano was frightened, she turned, and her lips have met this hot breath. Not in force to tear off the lips from other hot lips, she stood, expecting. The wind blew behind, as if pushing her to Anvar. The moon stuck on the top of a poplar and as if being shaken by the wind, watched them behind its branches. The pale star rolled down from sky to the earth to consider closer these two enamoured.

– Answer, Rano!

– How can I answer in such position?

– Yet you do not answer, I will not release you!

– Father can come...

– Father himself gave me today permission...

She easily touched her left temple on Anvar's chin and took away sight.

– Let it be, when do you want!

– And if I want tomorrow?

– All right...

Anvar kissed the gentle girl's face which was close to him, smoothed hair scattered on her shoulders, with pleasure inhaling aroma of these plaits.

– Tell me the truth, Rano, I wish to answer as you wish!

– Let in spring...

– The truth?

– The truth.

Let it will be so. Tomorrow I will say it, that the wedding is going to be in the spring... When the earth will be covered by a green carpet and when violets blossom, birds start to nest, then also we will celebrate the wedding, we will hear happiness words in ours chimildik¹ and we will bless the destiny. So, Rano?

– Yes...

– And you then will not shiver, as a birdie, in my embraces, being afraid, that father can come. You will be whole mine with all your beauty, with all your charm.

Rano, not answering, liberated herself from Anvar's embraces and rose. She approached a short flight of stairs, put on shoes and quickly so that Anvar could not catch up her, ran off.

– Rano, do not leave; you did not give the answer!

– Yes! – Rano shouted, standing at the flower bed and correcting her shawl. – But now I will not come more to you here.

– Why?

– You became bad... I will tell to mum! Anvar laughed.

– What will you tell to mum?

– I will tell everything!

27

THE HOTBED OF VIOLENCE

In 1283 by Khidzhra chronology (1864–1865 by the modern chronology) Khudoyar Khan for the 3rd time in the last decades ascended the throne (twice he had been overthrown and deprived of his reign and twice was returned to Kokand as the Khan). This last period of his reign came as the worst in terms of despotism and violence against his nation. From 1283 to 1292 by Khidzhra chronology – 8 years passed with Khudoyar's absolute rule right to kill and whip his people.

Having decided to improve the public welfare state in 1284 he made Kokand's amateur craftsmen work voluntarily for the construction of a new market, Karavan-Saray, cotton and bread barns.

In 1285 he built the Akasaray Palace which was located in the Urgench district of Kokand. Water-system was created to water the territories around the palace, so that the Khan could enjoy a cool climate in hot days at the Bogy Eram. The Garden Paradise was built for him, so that he could have fun

with the girls in the harem. In 1286, executing his mother's last will he constructed famous "Khakim-Ayim Madrasah" and surrounded the new palace, built by Emir Umarkhan by gardens and flowerbeds (the old palace was built in 1145 by Khidzhra chronology by the son of Shokhrukh Khan – Abdurakhman. It became too dilapidated in time and couldn't answer to Khudayar's requirements any longer).

In 1286–1287 the famous Ulugnakhr (the Great River) or Khan-aryk (Khan's river) was built by Khudoyar's degree. The madrasah named after him was constructed in 1287 and the old Kalandar Khana – the residence of dervishes was converted into the Madrasah in honor of Khudayar's elder brother, Sultanmuradkhan, in 1288. That very year Khudayar fed his nation for 120 days in a row in honour of his son Urman Khan's circumcision. During this four months festivity 200 cauldrons of plov were cooked, 800 clay tandoors baked flat-breads and 200 races were organized. A thousand robes were given to noble guests who were coming to the capital from all over the country.

Such great festivities will surely require much gold from the Khan's treasury. People might think and the main source of the Khan's treasury fortune is the strength that's being squeezed out from people. But Khudayar's hospitality and his care for the people's needs didn't require gold gained from his subordinates. No, it required the people's labor and their tears. Since the days of Mukhamadali-Khan (1240) constant fighting for the throne. Uzbek and Kipchaks battles and other conflicts had literary devastated the Khan's treasury and when Khudayar came in 1283 to the power, he bequeathed his absolutely empty treasury. The "public welfare" period of Khudayar's reign, that lasted for a few years turned out to be the most difficult for the people of Ferghana valley.

Let's take the story of the construction of the Syr-Darya channel as an example for the above mentioned facts.

The Khan decided to build a channel. Neither the empty treasury nor the exceptional difficulty of his enterprise made him hesitant. He sent all of his subordinates to all the towns and villages belonging to him. They were told to collect taxes and free labor-force. At first, the work aimed at constructing the channel was voluntary, but then Khan issued a special decree which said that "Each family needs to provide me with one worker and one hoe".

The whip was clacking the air, the steel blade threatened people to death. Who would dare not to stick to Khan's orders?! Each family, even if it meant they would be losing the head of the family was sending a hoe-armed worker to the place selected by the Khan. Well-to-do people were expected to send their worker and send a horse or a horse with the horse-cart to the bargain.

They had to construct a 6 arshin in width 5 to 15 arshins in depth and 30 miles long channel. This 30 miles-long aryk was supposed to irrigate 2000 batmans (measuring earth) of soil in Namangan and Andijan districts. People got down to digging this aryk. A great many of them came to work, but there was nothing to feed them with. Bays were getting rid of his obligation by sending their batraks instead. Rows of dekhkans and craftsmen with hoes in their hands were scattered all around the 30 miles construction-site out in the desert. They left their hungry families behind. They didn't have enough money to buy food and whatever food provided by khan was too scanty and insufficient. Now, it's not a secret that a hoe requires much strength especially when a man works out in the hardpan and dry steppe. So, you can't work well without eating something substantial.

Malnourished workers lost their strength quickly they couldn't work well, they couldn't even raise their hoes. Overseers appointed by Khan called these hungry dehydrated people lazybones. They scoffed them violently and weren't allowing to drop their hoes. People were falling down them-

selves. Every 15 or 20 day the Khan would come to check on the construction works. Relying on the slanderous overseers who blamed workers for disobedience and lack of mettle the Khan executed couple of workers in front of the rest. Having eye-witnessed it themselves the rest of people kept plugging away despite the ever growing hunger and weakness.

Thus mostly due to these strict regulations less than a year was needed to cope with this task. The waters of enigmatic and immense Sir-Darya flowed like silver into the steppe and the wastelands. These wastelands that never knew any vegetation began to get covered by the first grass, for they were watered by worker's blood.

This example shows us plainly that the Khan's innovations – the building of Madrasahs, strong holds, bazaars, sarays and many gardens along with long-lasting festivities were carried out not by means of resources from the treasury, but by the utilization of free labor-force.

Still the Khan was building Madrasahs, canals and some people might say even: "Although this Khan was cruel, he did many things to improve living conditions in the country". Therefore, my task here is to explain the reasons beneath the Khan's bustling activities.

Being twice overthrown, he already gained some political experience plus his 3rd ascending to power coincided with the Russian empire victories, the Tsar forces had captured Tashkent and were stretching their hands to Khodjent. These circumstances made Khan change his previous policy. He had to stabilize his authority, draw the upper society-clergymen, merchants and confront the Russian Tsar who like a hungry dragon was approaching the Khan's lands with his own revived culture. Therefore, the Khan utilized people's strength mercilessly, building Madrasah and canals, bazaars, Kalandar-Khanas (a place for pilgrims and darvishes) and palaces. The old palace that had served as

a palace of reign for many Khans, since the days of Abdulkarimkhan was pulled down and a new one was built on its place. Khudayar had to show all the beauty of his Ferghana state and not lose it at the same time.

"Fire flames brighter before going out" – that's how the proverb goes. And in my humble opinion, Khudayar's cares, so much unusual for the Turkestani Khans, his efforts to make his country be a better place can be explained away by the aforementioned facts. There's nothing else to it.

28

THE HAREM

This new palace of which we spoke already was grandiose and fine. You can still see its beauty looking at its remnants. The palace was surrounded by beautiful flowerbeds and fruit gardens from the four sides outside. Khudayar's royal poet, Domulla Niyaz Mukhammad wrote the following eulogy to these gardens.

Those happy days had been marked by the Khan's divine garden

The smell of roses was coming out from it.

It smelled with basil and mint divinely

The dome of our world smelled sweetly of umbra

There're eight gorgeous flowerbeds in padishakh's garden.

And each one of them is full of flowers that sparkle like diamonds.

There're so many fruits that a man won't be able to taste them all.

They're sweeter than sugar

Bazaars are sparkling red by tulips

They sparkle emerald by rosy roses

All the rare plants are here in the Garden of our Shakh

So let him walk around his garden for a hundred blossoming years to come

The poet wished Khudayar longevity; he asked God to give Khan hundred years of life which he would spend enjoying the atmosphere of those gardens.

If we rely on Domulla Niyaz's depiction, the trade center and bazaar square surrounded Khan's gardens from three sides. Throngs of people were coming here day and night. The Royal Guards guarded the entrance to the garden and strangers who didn't work at the palace couldn't gain access. Only once a week when some recreations activities were organized for the Khan, privileged people were allowed in. Entering the garden one could see the gates of a new palace. These gates were adorned beautifully and one could get blind by looking at their shiny surface. Anyone entering the garden felt that he was standing in front of Khan and overwhelmed by his strength and power. Instead of getting enchanted by the glamour of the building he would feel fear. The guards-djigits with Algerian blades in their hands were walking to and under the ornate towers made from bricks, not letting any stranger in. That place of the Palace where Harem had been located had a double security measure. Even those who worked at the palace weren't allowed in. Only the Khan's sons, his wives, relatives, maid-servants, midwives and some women on Khans "special" affairs were allowed to go through these gates. The Khan himself didn't enter these gates, he could get into the harem through the Throne Hall or Khan's chancellery.

It had happened in 1287 by Khidzhra chronology in the Sumbolya (September) month in the cool day of early autumn that resembled a spring day. Closer to the evening at about five p.m. all the bustling activity at the Palace came to a halt and the guards who stood at the gates weren't allowing any visitors in. Royal employees, beks, scribes, yasavuls (militarymen from Khan's guard), Khan's advisors were all,

one by one leaving the palace. Djigits who guarded the main entrance were escorting high-ranking beks with deep bows, and were kidding around with low-ranking ones. Beks came up to their horses, looking at them up and down and scolded the stablemen if their horses were poorly fed or unclean. Eventually these beks would mount their horses with the help of stablemen and leave.

This was the hour when porters weren't allowing anyone in, even those who had some urgent affairs with the Khan.

– Now what kind of a man is this one! What's in his cars, dough or what? – The porter cried out peevishly, barely taking a look at the visitor who stood off to one side. – I told you to save your breath and leave. Even if Sheri-Yazdon (prophet Muhammad (s.a.v.)'s son-in-law Ali) showed up here I wouldn't have let him in!

The visitor, losing all hope of getting into the palace returned altogether.

That's when a woman in parandja from bevaressian silk appeared at the gates and went through them bravely. The guardians who hadn't let in Sheri-Yazdon himself looked her up and down silently. Having entered the garden, the woman went straight to the palace and having gone through the beautifully ornated gates turned right. She was going to the harem. Guards under the Palace wall didn't say anything, they just followed her with their eyes and let her go further as if recognising. But as soon as this woman reached the door to the harem and was about to step over its threshold, djigit who stood by the entrance drew out with loud clanking his sabre from its sheath.

– Stop!

The woman halted and looked at djigit. Then she unveiled a part of her face and djigit's threatening expression turned into a smile. He put the sabre into its sheath.

Having unveiled her face altogether the woman went into the Harem. It was Gulshanbonu, a beautiful woman of 35.

Gulshanbonu, the maid-servant of the harem, was graced with Khudayar-Khan's attention during his 2nd ascension to the throne. When he was overthrown and had to escape to Bukhara, Mallakhan, his brother who took the throne convicted Khudayar for his licentious behavior and excessive interest in women. Hundreds of them from Khudayar's harem were married off to new Khan's djigits. Gulshanbonu was presented by Mallakhan to one of djigits who exhibited unusual prowess in fights against Khudayar-Khan. Since then she was considered to be djigit's wife.

When Khudoyar returned his throne the 3rd time in his life Gulshan came up to him and asked to be taken back in name of their old friendship to work at the Harem. Gracious Khan granted Gulshanbonu a very high position in the Harem. Everyone could be entrusted. You'll soon come to learn the sphere of her responsibilities.

Having entered the harem, Gulshanbonu smoothed out her parandja, tousled hair, shook the dust off the hem of her blue silk-dress, fixed her golden rings adorned by rubies and emeralds on her fingers and went up the stair almost 20 steps that led to the corridor that ran along the whole palace. On both sides of the corridor the forced doors of Bukhara style could be seen. These boors led to harem's different premises.

Gulshan entered this corridor and opened the first door. An old maid-servant who stood by that door bowed down to Gulshan and closed the door behind her. It was the water yard of the harem. In the middle of the yard dark-green water was splashing in the coppery pool. Few maid-servants were pailing water out from this pool. There were no other premises here except a small room for maid-servants located in the northern part of the yard. Another door was indented into the southern wall. This pool provided the whole harem with water and once a week at some definite time it

was filled by water brought in by water-carriers in leather sacks.

Gulshan took off her parandja and holding it in one hand came up to the second door and knocked on it lightly. Again a maid servant opened the door. It was a young girl this time, though she took Gulshan's parandja and greeted Gulshan in a low voice "Welcome!"

It was the the first part of the harem. It was surrounded by the same halls with ornate walls, ceiling, glassed balconies and wood-cut sun-blinds from all four sides. A lobby led into each of these halls. This small yard was tiled with bricks. A few maid-servants dressed in red-woolen dresses with yellow-woolen kerchiefs on their heads and soft boots on their legs were scattered around the yard and attended to their businesses. Their slow steps, conversation by short nods and gestures or at the very least by half-whispered words. As if they were aware of some lurking enemy or were afraid of some terrible monster, led one to think that something highly unusual was going on here. Gulshan, as if feeling it all, greeted the maid-servants in a low voice and whispered to one of them:

– His Highest?

– In the Royal Chambers! – Said the maid-servant wording the answer almost unavoidably.

The Khan's chambers – his private rooms – three halls in which he ate, slept and met his wives, were located along the water yard and were adjacent to the Royal chancellery and the throne hall. These rooms, as it behooves to King's Chambers are higher than others and occupied the eastern part of the palace. The Southern part was occupied by Harem and kitchens. The Khan's treasury and exits and other yards and halls were located in the Western part.

Having heard that His Highest is in the Royal Chambers" Gulshan dallied a bit as if pondering whether she should go there or not, then having fixed her hair, kerchief dress and

went toward the Royal Chambers. She'd barely taken four steps when a maid – servant went out of one of the halls and beckoned her:

– Ogacha-Khanim is calling you, – she said.

Gulshan turned round and followed the maid – servant. She came into the lobby where other maid – servants were sitting along the wall. There were busy with the needle-work. Gulshan greeted them. At this very moment a handsome white and black – eyed boy went out of the hall. His yellow clothes rustled with his each step.

– Greetings! Are you faring well, my little Lord? – said Gulshan pressing her hands against her breast and bowing deeply to the boy.

The boy didn't answer; he just smiled, looked up at Gulshan and ran back to the hall. Gulshan took off her kavushas at the threshold to step onto the carpet. The lobby was a large room with ornate walls with eleven beams supporting the ceiling; the indentations in the walls were filled with satin and adras blankets. The long mattresses for sitting. Shelves contained Chinese and Kashgarian porcelain dishes, bukharian coppery and silver jugs and saucers.

As soon as Gulshan took off her shoes, the women occupied with the needle – work stood up and came over to greet her. The maid – servant who called her went out of the hall and told Gulshan to come in.

29

OGACHA – AYIM

Having come to the door Gulshan fixed her big white kerchief and came into the hall. The maid-servant who also stood here by the entrance bowed down, folded her hands on her breast and said:

– Welcome!

The beauty of the hail adorned by rare carpets, silk mattresses, gold and silverware was literally blinding. Colored windowpanes of three windows overlooking the palatial yard were marvel in itself. For they shone brightly and the light going through then threw red reflecting lights upon the chandelier that hung from the middle of the ceiling. The woman caressing a little boy on her knees, sat on a silk-praying rug facing the East wall. The woman turned around having heard Gulshan coming in.

Gulshan folding her hands on her breast stopped by the door and bowed down deeply.

– Come in Gulshan! – The woman said – Greetings! Take a seat, please.

Gulshan bowed again and went to the window. She sat down and prayed:

– Let God send you more happiness and glory, Ayim-Khanum! Let the life of Khan's son be long and happy!

The maid-servant who stood by the immobile doors also sat down and read fatkha. Having finished praying she again stood up and took her position by the doors.

The woman of 35 who sat at praying-mat and caressed the boy was dressed in the satin dress, jacket made from Bukhara satin and an embroidered kerchief. She was the highly respected Ogacha. The Khan's wife and the boy was Khan's most favorite son – Urmanbek. Ogacha-Ayim had a bit slanted eyes, which resembled the eyes of a Chinese woman. All her appearance had plainly shown that she wasn't a daughter of Turkestan. Her speech however didn't have the slightest hint of the accent. Her real name was Masuda-Khanim, but she was more known as Ogacha-Ayim. She was from Kashgar. Uyghurs say "Ogacha" instead of our "Khanim, bekach". Masuda was the daughter of Ibadullakhodja, the Uyghur who lived in the vicinity of Osh.

Khudoyar had married her when he ascended his throne for the second time. When he had to leave the throne and

ran for his life to Bukhara, the majority of his wives cheated on him and got married with other men. Ogacha-Ayim was the only one, who'd been there for him, thus earning with her fidelity the Khan's love and respect. She was the cleverest and most judicial among Khan's other wives into the bargain. Therefore, the whole harem and hundreds of maid-servants were under her influence. All the scandals between rivaling wives were solved by Ogacha-Ayim. Whole harem had to be obedient and Khan himself gave her the right to solve all the quarrels. When the time to get new clothes approached, Ogacha-Ayim herself tended to the needs and wants of other wives. She usually addressed the treasurer with other wives' requests and distributed ready-made clothes herself. Daily the food at the kitchen was cooked and distributed at Ogacha-Ayim's orders. Everyone beginning from other Khan's wives who wanted to go to the sauna, maid-servants, midwives, seamstresses going to marriage parties and other occasions, everyone had to get Ogacha-Ayim's permission first. Sometimes Ogacha-Ayim interfered with the state-governing decisions, making the Khan decide on the things that would benefit her. Sometimes even the Khan agreed with her.

When one of the Khan's wives, Shakhayim died leaving Urmanbek, Khan's son whom he loved and wanted to pass his throne, Khudoyar entrusted Ogacha-Ayim with the education and upbringing of his beloved son. Ogacha-Ayim raised Urmanbek as if he was her own son for which Khan began to respect her even more.

Without paying much attention to Gulshan, Ogacha-Ayim continued her dialogue with Urmanbek.

- You're being very naughty, my son! I'll complain to your father about it and you'll get a sound threshing.

- Give me the quail and I'll stop being naughty!

- You've already strangled all the quails to death, you rogue of a boy! Where would I get you one from?

- I didn't strangle them, they died themselves.

- Why did you beat nanny Ziyarak?
- She didn't want to give me a quail!

Ogacha-Ayim looked at the maid-servant who stood by the doors.

- Come over here, Miskol, - said she, patting Urmanbek on his back. - Go and play with the nanny, we'll try to find you a quail tomorrow.

The maid-servant led Urmanbek away.

- Don't let anyone in, - said Ogacha-Ayim, - And don't forget to close the door.

As soon as the maid-servant and the boy went away, Ogacha-Ayim swapped the praying mat and said:

- Come closer to me, Gulshan.

Suspecting the importance of the dialogue Gulshan came closer and folding her hands on her breast kneeled down.

- Anything new in the city, Gulshanbonu?

- I don't think there is any news of which Ogacha-Ayim wouldn't know anything.

- Are you all right, how are your relatives?

- They're fine, thanks to you and His Highest's grace.

- How are you? - Ogacha-Ayim asked smiling. - Haven't you found me a rival yet?

Gulshan looked down. Ogacha-Ayim waited for her answer, smiling.

- Although you're trying hard to find me a rival it's not because of your own will. It's all because of Said's will, so I can't blame you, - said Ogacha-Ayim.

These words helped Gulshan to get over her hesitation.

- Of course it's so!

I hope you won't try to turn your back on my advice, - said Ogacha-Ayim seriously. - I've something clandestine to tell you.

- I swear by God. I won't do it, M'lady!

Ogacha-Ayim took one of the cushions and leaned against it.

– I spoke to aunty Batirbashi the other day. Said should know nothing about it, though. I hope you'll be careful, for we've been on friendly terms for quite some time now.

– Your servant isn't a gossip, M'lady.

– That's how it should be, – said Ogacha-Ayim.

It's not a secret that Khan has tens of us – wives (According to Shariath one can't have more than four wives. Khudoyar several times converted his fourth wife into a slave, so that he could marry a new wife). If we count all the maid-servants then the approximate number of wives would be more than a hundred. Said's harem has grown considerably bigger. Owing to auntie Batirbashi and the neighboring beks efforts.

We thought we would be living better on having moved to the new spacious palace, but it happened that the place gets more and more crowded as time goes by. There were eight-nine maid-servants who share the same room in the palace. If we go on like this, a need to build a new palace in one year's time might arise. It, however isn't possible. If Said starts paying all his attention to the harem, our state affairs might suffer and it would be our fault entirely. Having thought all these matters over I decided to talk to you ... Auntie Batirbashi came to like my reasoning and she promised to help me. I want the same thing from you, Gulshan think it all over and come up with your own opinion on it.

Gulshan, as if not understanding what Ogacha-Ayim was talking about began to reflex.

– Your faithful slave doesn't quite understand what it's you're driving at, M'lady?

– Well; if you don't quite get it, I tell you what: don't bring any of the new slaves or wives to the harem anymore! – said Ogacha-Ayim.

Gulshan dropped her head. She didn't like Ogacha-Ayim's orders. Not at all. Who would like to be deprived of daily crust of bread?

- But my dear M'lady, what role am I supposed to play in your enterprise? There's the Khan's will to it ... I'm just an arrow that was shot from Khan's bow!

Ogacha-Ayim looked at Gulshan attentively. Again she looked down evading her gaze.

- All of us are arrows fired by his bow. - Said Ogacha-Ayim getting angry. - To scout around without understanding well if it's good or bad however is stupidity! If you and I are faithful slaves that belong to His Highest, we mustn't damage Said's state, we're supposed to be his sensible friends. This is when we've an opportunity to show Said our devotion ... It might seem to look like treason for a by-stander, but in reality it's nothing but expression of fidelity and friendship. Therefore, I'm making this offer. Don't you even try to think that I'm jealous of Said - I'm his 101st wife after all. It's silly to be jealous when you're one among a hundred others! As I have already told you my main motivation is fidelity and true worry for the state of our country. Do you understand me, Gulshan?

Gulshan understood that she unsettled Ogacha-Ayim saying "I'm an arrow shot from the Khan's bow". Now that she understood her mistake she tried to make up for it:

- I meant to say it in another sense, my lady ... Of course we'll...

- If you don't know what to do yourself ask my advice.

- Of course if you are like any real mentor you should take me by my hand and show the way. I'll gladly sacrifice my life for his Highest's happiness!

- Well, if it's really so, let's keep it a secret. For it isn't treason but care for the State - said Ogacha-Ayim - My advice to you: never hurry whenever you're given a task. 1st think then act.

- What if the Khan will try to force me into doing this?

- You can evade it easily, - said Ogacha-Ayim. - Try not to get into the field of his vision. If, however he saw you,

say that you can't find any beautiful maid-servant and offer your apologies. He won't torture you for not finding a suitable beautiful girl. If you need money, I'll help you with it to the best of my capacity. Will it do, Gulshanbonu?

Gulshan's face beamed with happiness.

– Yes it'll do, my dear M'lady!

– Akhsan!

One of the girls who sat in the lobby and was Ogacha-Ayim's treasure, came to her call.

– At your service!

– Give Gulshan two golden pieces and get her munsak (woman's garment. Short and light robe). Akhsan bowed deeply, folded her hands on her breast and went out.

– Come to me if you happen to need something. Don't hesitate and come the way you did today!

Gulshan bowed down and bent her head as a sign of gratitude. Akhsan opened the door, went back in holding munsak in her hands and came closer to Gulshan. Gulshan stood up from her place and bowed before her lady-khan. Akhsan helped her with munsak and gave her golden pieces. Gulshan, munsak on her, sat back on the carpet carefully. Akhsan squatted before her. Gulshan raised her hands for thanksgiving and Akhsan said "Amen!"

Then Gulshan and Akhsan taking the treasure moved slowly backwards and left Ogacha-Ayim's room.

30

KHAN'S WIVES

When Gulshan found herself in the lobby, the girls began congratulating her on this gift, for she "Deserved kind attention". Putting on shoes Gulshan kept looking at the khan's chambers. Then she said "Goodbye" to the maid-servants and went out to the yard. As I've already

said the favorite wives with their midwives, seamstresses, maid-servants and slaves lived around this yard.

Near to Ogacha-Ayim's room on the second floor the Khan's favorite wife Roziya-Ayim lived. It hasn't been two years yet, since she became the Khan's wife, but owing to her exceptional beauty she's acquired Khan's attention and consequently became one of the most influential wives in the harem. Four maid-servants and two slaves were serving her, Roziya-Ayim, Akhundjan's daughter was from Kashgar. As a young girl, she was married off to the Kokand bay Djanbobo, she bore a son from him and soon afterwards became a widow. Then she married Kokand Khazrat Mien Fazl Bakhab. Khufiya, – a woman who had the same responsibility of scouting beautiful girls for the Khan just as Gulshan – told Khan about her exceptional beauty. One sunny day the Khan had sent a cart for Roziya-Khanim inviting her to visit him.

What could Mien Fazl Vakhab do against the Khan's will? Having spent one night in the Khan's harem Roziya came back home the following morning. Her husband, Mien Fazl Vakhab then divorced her and sent her back to the palace with cartfuls of goods. Whether he did it out of anger or simply fear of the Khan is still a mystery for Roziya (the biggest amount of facts about Harem was provided to us by Roziya-Ayim. Due to her exceptional memory, this now 90 year-old woman told me many valuable details. She amazed me by still-present traits of Khan's wife. I offer my deep gratitude to Roziya-Ayim and to Basit Kadirov – he's my friend from Kokand and he was 90 between me and Roziya-Ayim. In short I owe him many things).

Barely Gulshan reached Roziya-Ayim's residence when two maid-servants opened the doors to her lobby and stood by the open doors, their heads bowed respectfully. At the same very moment a supple woman, slim like Cypress, with white a face as if it was milk itself, dark almond eyes

that can be compared with a moonless night only with jet black hair that reached her ankles dressed in a silk and gold came out from the room. Her head with numerous braids was covered by light embodied kerchief: she was dressed in a black and white silk dress. The hems of which were also elaborately embroidered: she also had a jacket from Bukharian silk on with bottoms made from rubies. It was the Khan's favorite wife – Roziya-Ayim herself. She was followed by a black boy of eight or nine with snow white teeth and whites of his eyes. This little slave was always at the ready to serve his mistress (Slaves who lived at Khudoyar's palace were mostly tadjiks and negroes, whose age didn't exceed 12. Roziya claims that whenever a little slave turned 12 he was removed from the Harem and given some job at the Palace. There were only two slave-eunuchs and they lived during the times of Khudoyar's mother – Khakim-Ayim (died in 1285) their names were Eshmat-Sarkar and Tashmat-Sarkar, both of them were negroes, but even they didn't have the right to enter the harem with out the Khan's permission. Every day when the Khan went to greet his mother these slaves would come along with him and having bowed down to Khakim-Ayim would retire with Khan. Apparently Khakim-Ayim got these slaves from Sher-ali-Khan.

Roziya states that these were the only eunuch-slaves in the palace. So, the pronouncements of Russian-writers that eunuchs lived in harems were erroneous. Roziya says that: "The first time Khudoyar was dethroned he took several slaves along with him to Jizzakh. There they were given proper education and appointed to work in the palace afterwards. Their names are: Shogulom – Head Town-crier, Djamil, Fayzulla and Mullacha – treasurers, Davlatudaychi, Davlat-Sarkar, Shosaid – Kurbashi. They hadn't been eunuchs and weren't allowed to come into the harem". Gulshan bowed down deeply to Roziya-Ayim. Roziya-Ayim nodded

at her and said "How are things?" and without waiting for the answer made her way to the King's chambers.

Gulshan came to the room, where Khan's third wife Kurban-Ayim dwelled and asked the maid-servants how was she doing. The fourth room in the western part of the yard was occupied by Shodmon-Ayim. She was the last Khan's wife who lived in the main yard (Roziya-Ayim says that Khudoyar had married the following women, during his intermittent reign: 1) Kozoktura-Kyrghyz, Roziya-Ayim doesn't know for sure who was her father and I tend to wonder if she was Mosulmankul's daughter: she had 4 maid-servants. 2) Anbarchiktura the daughter of Khudoyarbek. A civil servant from Uratyupe. 3) Katta-posho-Ayim the daughter of Khodzi Kaln from Kokand 2 the mother of Nasreddinbek: she had 7 maid-servants and 4 slaves. 4) Kukonlik-Ayim from the Sarmazar district of Kokand (Roziya-Ayim doesn't know whose daughter was she): when Khan was thrown out from Kokand the 1st time she married another man. 5) Kurban-Ayim Urmanbek's treasurer, she had 3 maid-servants, 2 slaves; her daughter Shakhzodakhon died in Osh in 1919: 6) Duchess Shirin from bay family. She had 3 maid-servants and 2 slaves. 7) Duchess Gulzoda - she had 4 maid-servants and her daughter Tura-Ayim was married off to Karamat-khan, bek from Kokand. 8) Isfaralik-Ayim a daughter of Isfarian ishan Khabib. She had a daughter Mokhzodakhon who was married off to Isakhan, the son of Safokhon from Kokand (they say, Mokhzodakhon was still alive back then); When Khudoyar got his throne he threw Isfaralik out of the palace on grounds of licentious behavior.

Here are the wives Khudoyar married during the 2nd term of his reign. 9) Muniskhon-posho, the Daughter of Gazikhan from Kokand, she had 8 maid-servants and 4 slaves: she gave birth to Said-Umarbek who currently lives in Tura-Kishlak, Rashidan district. 10) Posho-bonu-Ayim, the sister of famous Bakhodir-Khan from Kokand, the mother of

Mokhammed-Aminbek and Chorsolakhon-posho, she had 9 maid-servants and 5 slaves. 11) Masudakhon (Ogacha-Ayim) the daughter of Ibadulla-Khadji and the mother of Fansurul-labek. 12) Kishbibibi (Kyz-Ayim) the daughter of Khudoyar's uncle Gadoybay-dodkho; Previously sha had been Shomurad-Khan's wife and when Shomurad died, Khakim-Ayim married her son, Khudoyar to her in Bukhara; she had 5 maid-servants and 3 slaves. 13) Shakh-Ayim jr., the daughter of Shughan mayor Urmanbek's mother. She died when the boy wasn't 40 days old even. 14) Tokhta-posho (Chindovullik-Ayim) from the Chindovul village, Namangan region, her daughter's name is Khudzha: she had 4 maid-servants and 3 slaves. 15) Shakh-Ayim senior, the daughter of Darbaz Mayor: she gave birth to Said Fansarulla, who was killed at the age of 5 by Polat-Khan in Margelan; she had 7 servants. 16) Duchess Gulandom from Bays family. 17) Duchess Mokh-begim from the Bay family, the Mother of Benjaminbek; she had 3 maid-servants and 3 slaves. 18) Duchess Gulkyz from Bay family. 19) Duchess Asal from the bay family.

Khudoyar's wives during the last term of his reign: 20) Ayim from Karategin, the daughter of Karategin mayor; she had 7 maid-servants. 21) Bibi-posho-Ayim from Ekovat, she was born in Ekovat village, near Namangan, she's the daughter of Khudjam-posho ishan; she had 34 maid-servants and 2 slaves. 22) Roziya-Ayim who provided us with all this data; she'd a son Said Umarbek, but he died at an early age. 23) Kambar-posho jr., the daughter of Khodja-Tura bek; when the elder wife died Khudoyar married sister-in-law; she'd 3 maid-servants. 24) Oynisakhon-posho, the daughter of Tursun foreman. 25) Tukhfanisa-Ayim the daughter of Altiaryk Kazi; 37 days after marrying her, Khudoyar went to Tashkent to pay his respect to Russian tsar. 26) Khamrock-bibi-Ayim, the daughter of Nurmatbay from Kokand. 27) Saidanisa (Chimenlik-Ayim) the daughter of Kyrghyz. 28) Shodmon-Ayim from rich family; they say she

was Khan's favorite; she had 3 maid-servants and 3 slaves. 29) Duchess Gulbonu from bay – family; she gave birth to a daughter Ozodakhon who got married with Bakhadir-Khan, a Bek from Kokand. 30) Rukh-Afzobekach. 31) Saykal-bekach. 32) Sanobar-bekach. 33) Arguvoni-bekach. 34) Nigor-bekach. 35) Puzvon-bekach. People say that these last 6 wives were from rich families.

I tend to believe that this's not the full list of Khudoyar's wives. It's quite possible that Roziya-Ayim didn't remember them all.

When we talked to Aoziya-Ayim, my friend Basit asked her kiddingly "So, how many times did this Khan marry?" Roziya-Ayim answered abashedly: "Damn him, no one can count all the wives he had, my son!" (That's what she said and I tend to believe she was right).

Gulshan went through the last hall of a main yard and found herself in the corridor of which you've already heard.

The maid-servant from the water-yard on seeing Gulshan put the copper bucket down to the ground and went up to her running.

– Congratulations! How're you doing, how's your mother?

Gulshan with the tips of her fingers touched the shoulder of the maid-servant.

– How about you? Are you ok and well? How's Muniskhon-posho-Ayim doing? Is Bibi-posho-Ayim getting better?

– Yes, she's, praise God ... Come to visit us!

– I will, – said Gulshan taking off her robe. – Don't tell anyone I'm here. I'll come to visit you a bit later.

At this very moment the door at the end of the corridor crashed open and two bare-foot maid-servants ran out of there chasing one another. Having seen Gulshan who was busy taking off her munsak the girls came to her.

– Gulshandjan, Gulshandjan! How are you? Is everything all right? Congratulations with new clothes, – playful

girls surrounded Gulshan and she has gone completely deaf by the volleys of their questions.

– Enough, enough! Why won't you die instead, my playful mares, – said Gulshan. – What will Khanshis say if they hear you babbling like this?

Girls without paying much heed to Gulshan's protests began to pull her toward the door they ran out from.

– Gulshandjan! Our contended horse! Contended horse!

Although Gulshan was angry with them she couldn't keep herself from laughing.

– Damn you all! That's the reason why I'm a rare guest at your place.

Without listening to Gulshan one of the girls began to tug at munsak playfully.

– Where did you get it from? Why don't you give it to me?

– Go ahead and take it, – Gulshan said. – Let it become your joy!

– I'll surely be covered by the same one when I die!

They reached the door at the end of the corridor and went inside.

31

FORTY GIRLS

Gulshan went into the yard known as "Forty girls". Singers, dancers and musicians who entertained Khan lived here. There were 40 of them that's why the yard had this name.

There were 158 slaves in Khan's harem. 14 of them worked at Ak-saray (Khan's residence), 8 served at the Khan's private chambers 8 looked after the Khan's son Urmanbek, 10 were under the midwives command, 25 worked at the "Forty girls" yard and the rest of the slaves worked with Khan's wives.

Few of the girls who had heretofore been playing games with ball ran up to Gulshan.

- How are you doing?
- Still fluttering like wind, never grow tired!
- Is your husband still alive?
- How are the city djigits faring?

These girls were as playful as the ones Gulshan had previously met. She herself grew jolly and began asking them questions.

- Hope it's not that boring here, is it? Has anyone given birth to a child yet? Has anyone of you been caught with a lover?

The "40 girls" yard consisted of a hall, four small rooms, kitchenette and other staff premises for those who lived in the yard. The girls had red woolen dresses, same-colored kerchiefs embroidered with yellow flowers and adras or satin cardigans on. Those who played the ball game were barefoot and those who were busy working at the yard or cooking food had smooth leathery kaushas on.

The majority of these girls were 20, 16 or 17 years old could also be found among them. All of them were exceptionally beautiful and had been sent in as presents to the Khan from neighboring Beks. Usually the Khan would spend couple days with them and then send to learn singing, dancing and music under the guidance of such celebrated masters as Nusrat Khafiz (singer), Batyrbashi-Khola, Tillya Khafiz, Tadji Khafiz, Miskol Khafiz, Khon-Ogacha, Misok-Ogacha, Ulug-oinchi (dancer), Shakh-bacha (dancer), Radjabkhan Tash Khafiz and even Zebikhan from Margelan herself. They've learnt the art of dancing, singing, and music to the point of perfection.

Every Friday the big hall of "Forty girls" yard would prepare for Bazm (party, concert). Girls would dress-up, put on jewelry and make up and appear before the eyes of public to charm and delight.

Often the Khan would come here after the Friday prayer. He was joined by Roziya-Khanum and Ogacha-Ayim. He had a special place of distinction by the front wall of a Big Hall from where he could savor the art of forty girls.

The girls dragged Gulshan out into the middle of the yard, persuading her to participate in their games. Gulshan was pretty much reluctant, but the girls insisted so fervently that she had to give in. She walked off to one side, took off her shoes and kerchief tucked her silk dress into shalwars, first rolling them up her knees. Finally, when she rolled up her sleeves she was presented with a ball made from silk.

– You'll have to hit the ball 50 times. After each 10 hits you need to spin around. The one who loses will have to carry others around the yard on her back.

Having known the roles of the game, Gulshan began to think deeply.

– What if I win?– She asked.

– Each of us will carry you around the yard.

– It's a deal, – said Gulshan walking out into the middle – Mind you, if you touch the ball or otherwise try to get into my way – you lose.

The girls agreed and stepped sideways. Gulshan hit the elastic ball, it flew high and Gulshan didn't have any difficulty hitting it 10 times. After these first ten hits she began to spin, her long braids spinned with her, her breasts bounced...

The girls laughed and shouted. The ball bounced ten more times and Gulshan took to spinning under the accompanying merry laughter of her friends. She began hitting the ball again, but this time the ball bounced sideways on the count of eight. Much Gulshan tried to hit it upwards, she failed in her efforts and the ball went jumping down to the ground. The shouting, laughing and clapping girls surrounded her. Gulshan tried to slip away from them but all her efforts came to nothing. One of the girls sneaked upon her from the behind and jumped onto her back.

– Khikh, my donkey!

The girls laughed like crazy, two of them took Gulshan by her braids and started dragging her along the yard. Those who worked or slept in the rooms and the kitchen went out to look at this spectacle.

The second girl climbed onto Gulshan after the first one, then another one and this poor Gulshan had to walk around the yard about 10 minutes. They've rode her so hard she thought her back might bleed.

The game went on.

Shortly before the evening prayer the dinner was ready. The girls went inside. Gulshan entered one of the rooms along with its inhabitants. Everything was scattered in this room: kerchiefs and other stuff. Thus the room resembled the mental state of the girls who lived in it.

Gulshan broke into violent swearing at seeing this chaos.

– What's this? Why can't you square everything away! Your place looks like a sack carried around by some gypsy woman!

– Why don't you help us then, Gulshanapa! – Exclaimed a girl whose name was Nazik.

– Me? I don't have anything to do with that.

– Neither do I.

– But you dwell here. A clean place makes one's soul clean.

– My soul is already clean – objected Nazik looking at Tukhfa who stood by. Then she laughed and asked her – What about your soul, Tukhfa?

Tukhfa opened her mouth widely and came up to Gulshan.

– Have a look, apa. My soul's so clean, one might think it's been scrobbed by forty charwomen.

– I can see it well! – said Gulshan, turning away – It's not enough though for a soul to be clean, it might need something else ...

– Like what, a husband? – said a girl name of Kumri-apa if you can know what a soul want why don't tou take insight into mine?

– Your soul needs a husband, – laughed Gulshan – Why don't you leave me alone? One word and you're all over me! Get plov... Lay the table, Nazik!

It took Nazik less than a minute to lay the table. Two Chinese dishes full of plov were put on top of the table-cloth. Gulshan in a company of 7 girls took to devouring it.

After the evening prayer, everyone without further delay came to the big hall, two drums have been made warm over fire, dutars, tamburs, chang and gidzhak were made ready. They planned to entertain themselves with music the way they did it every evening. What else could these poor hermits do if they were deprived of the happiness of family life and a man's presence. Their only entertainment in the daytime is ball game, music in the evenings, dreams at night.

Beautiful music began to pour down on them. The drum is the main instrument in the orchestra. It made slow tingling noise.

The eyes of the listeners shone, flickers of 40 candled chandelier dancing in the middle of the circle, her breast moving in sync with the song.

The hall was getting more and more crowded; girls who got used to coming here every evening were coming in large numbers.

The dancer bowed down slowly and left the circle. Nazik took her place. She had barely entered the circle when the music changed to a fast, merry motive. "Bak-Baking", "Bak-Baking drums" sang rhythmically.

Nazik moved seductively under the music. Few of the girls began to sing tenderly in sync with the music.

Tulips blossom, children pick them. Is it true the most beautiful enchantress has just passed us by?

*Her eyes are bright like shining stars
She keeps her gaze away from me
My chest is swollen, my soul is sad
Sweet poison makes it's way up and up
My soul is saddening to death
Nazik was artfully moving her body to this song
Grieve eats me up faster than ravenous flame
I'm losing my friend. He turns away from me
My heart beats stronger in hate
What about me, myself?
Her lips red roses ... Her beauty is like lily white
Could it be so that this's rouge and mascara
That make her look so beautifully wild
Her eyes sparkle in the dark with passion
The feast is on the way ...
Those who got sucked into the morass
 of pressurized violence
Will see their days end come their torn
I beg you! Have mercy upon my soul!
I'm in the harem closed off
Padishakh is feasting ...
Feast keeps going on
Beyond these many locked doors
My soul is tattered and torn
I feel so bad, I can't explain
How bad for me, poor girl Nazmi
To live and dwell in shame.*

The last lines of the song were permeated with tragedy. They full expressed the despair of the poor girl who'd been suffering and wilting from grief for many many years. The music that started from light, gay melody was beginning to get more and more dreary and the dancer's movements were conveying all the pain of her despair.

*Beyond these many locked doors
My soul is tattered and torn
I feel so bad, I can't explain
How bad for me, poor girl Nazmi
To live and dwell in shame.*

All who were present here knew the story of this hapless girl Nazmi. It was she, who was crying so bitterly now. Although she wasn't here. She, who'd grown tired of all the grief and tears, slept beneath the Earth surface. Not only girls knew of her unfortunate destiny, but also many of them mourned for her even now. It was she, the talented poet, who left them these songs. She created the music that reflected the sufferings of these poor caged birds. How could they forget her?! Whose soul won't be touched by the grief of a girl who has lost her beloved one, a girl who lost her honor forever? Whose heart won't be touched by these tears?

Yes ...They've lost their friend Nazmi about a year ago. It was she who composed this song. Nazmi was a beautiful girl who used to live in one of the Kokand region villages. One young man fell in love with her, their feelings were reciprocal. The day of their marriage was approaching. Against all luck, her father, a poor farmer, hadn't been paying taxes for several years. Tax collectors sent by Khudoyar-Khan came to the village and set the record straight with the poor man. Since this poor farmer didn't have anything valuable, except his daughter Nazmi, they took her and brought her to the Khan.

The Khan liked this beautiful girl. He entrusted her to the harem maid-servants. They took Nazmi to the sauna, dressed her up and the following few nights the Khan had fun with her. Then she'd been sent to the "Forty girls" yard. She'd spent two years here shedding bitter tears and composing different songs. Many songs she composed while in the Golden cage. Finally grief overcame her and she died from consumption.

After Nazmi's song the concert came to its end and all went to their rooms.

32

NAZIK

Gulshan decided to sleep in seven friend's room. While Nazik and Tukhfa were laying the beds, Kumri spoke to Gulshan merrily.

– Silly Gulshan-apa, – said Kumri. – Why did you leave your husband alone at home? What do you need with us, bachelors?

– Quit this chatter, shameless creature... – replied Gulshan. – I don't need anything with you of course. There's but one thing you think about ...

– Now, let me ask, what do you think about?

– I think of how to make a living, unlike you who don't know what to do with all your free time. I myself used to be a maid-servant. But never like you had I thought of ...

The girls were all ears.

Tukhfa, who was laying the bed, asked her.

– Haven't you ever thought about it?

Gulshan smiled, kept silent for a while and then said:

– I might have, but never voiced my thoughts. All these thoughts come from the evil one. If you pray and fast such things will never come to your mind. Take Zarifa, for example, she never says such impudent things.

– Ha-ha-ha! Pish! – Laughed Kumri, – Why don't you tell her what you dreamt about yesterday?

– Darn you! – Said Zarifa, turning away from Kumri. – It's none of your business what I dream about!

The girls began to get ready for going to bed. The beds were made lain close to one another Gulshan took the furthest one.

- Take off your dresses! - Ordered Kumri, getting undressed, - And don't forget to take off your pants!

The girls who got inspired by Naziks example began to slap each-other's naked bodies. Merry voices and giggling filled the bed chamber.

- Holy God! - Exclaimed Gulshan covering herself by blanket. - To sleep with you in one room is a sin!... Do you happen to know that you might have had 2 or 3 children now?

- You're perfectly right, my dear Gulshan! - Said Kumri examining her own body critically under the weak flickering light of a candle. - Have a look at me. I might have begotten 5 kids, I believe!

All the girls laughed merrily. Gulshan, opening one of her eyes also laughed merrily at what she saw.

- Blow the candle out!

Kumri did as was ordered. The room immersed into darkness. The girls, however kept their prankful mood. They continued to mess around with each other, stealing blankets and making noise and saying "Move over", "lay closer" and such.

- Can a person sleep in peace in this place? - Gulshan has finally gotten angry.

- Hush up, everyone! - Hissed Kumri - Gulshan came here to get some rest.

- Poor thing! - Joined in someone - She can't get enough of it at her own place because of her husband!

- That's why I'm not getting married, - continued Kumri. - Damn the husband! - He'd never let me sleep!

- Sleep, poor Gulshan, sleep! - Chimed in Tukhfa. - You don't mind us, girls.

The girls shook violently in bursts of laughter. Gulshan, losing the last remnants of seriousness laughed with them.

- Quit this meaningless babble! - Said she eventually, - Words should carry some meaning. All these "he-he-he"

and "ha-ha-ha" are absolutely meaningless ... Better get some sleep!

- What's the meaning" Gulshan-apa?! - Asked Tukhfa.

- Don't ask her the meaning of the word "meaning", - interrupted her Kumri. - She better tell us about the meaning of our stay here in the yard of "Forty girls".

- Knock it off, - broke Kumri. - The question is: Is there any meaning in the fact that Gulshan-apa left her husband at home alone and came here to visit us, thoughtless girls?

- Damn you all!

- There's some meaning! - Voices came in from every where - She'd bring us new friends.

- So what, if she does?

- The point is, there'll be more of us, poor thoughtless creatures.

- Satan curses you all! I'm not going to bring anyone. Sleep in peace.

- Bravo! - Exclaimed Nazik. - Now you're talking.

- You're wrong, Nazik. It's been a long time since Gulshan-apa became this wise.

- Since when did she become so clever?

- Since ... As long you have been married Gulshan-apa? The girls began to laugh again.

- Cut it all off. Enough of these obscenities, let's sleep instead!

- No, you wait, Gulshan-apa, - said Nazik.

- I'll tell you something decorous. Do you want to listen?

- Damn you and your story! Who needs it any way?

- It's a very interesting one. Anyway I won't let you sleep if you don't listen to it!

- Go ahead with your story. Be quick, I warn you - grumbled Gulshan turning about in her bed.

- I'll make it quick. My friends, lay still, pray you.

But the girls kept tickling each other and laughing without paying much attention to Nazik's words.

- Tukhfa, Kumri, be quiet. Or else I'll strangle you to death. Do you want? - Shouted Nazik.

But no one listened to her threats.

Nazik jumped up and all went under the cover of blankets.

- Navruz, I'll slap you on your lips!

An occasional burst of laughter could still be heard, but the general racket had somehow subsided.

- Are you sleeping, Gulshan-apa?

- No, tell your story!

Nazik shouted at her friends one more time and sat back down onto her bed.

- Once we were coming back here from the sauna, - she began. - Some young man was walking on the same road we took.

- It's an old story! - Said someone and girls began to giggle.

- So what? You don't want to listen to it, you don't have to. I'm telling it to Gulshan. Close your eyes and sleep.

- No, no, please. Go ahead with your story, we'll listen to it - said Tukhfa. - Navruz, Kumri, Khamrokh will you ever calm down or what?

- All right, so Gulshan-apa there was this young man who walked the same direction. How did he look? Smooth; A Rosy face that resembled fresh apple, eyes like doe's, moustache like young grass and eye-brows more beautiful and thinner than those of Roziya-Ayim ... He had a robe on that really fit him. We couldn't help look at him, am I right Tukhfa?

Tukhfa said "yes, you're right" and Nazik having made sure Gulshan is still awake continued to spin the yarn of her story.

- This djigit was young and a bit shy: having noticed that 20 girls are looking at him, he got embarrassed and

dropped his gaze. Auntie Nasiba and midwife Khanifa were escorting us back then. So, they saw that we took deep interest in this djigit and began to hasten. So, we had to walk faster but anyway we kept looking back. He also tried not to lag behind and walked behind. When we've already reached the gates of the palace I turned back and looked at him. He was about 10 paces behind. This is when, as if on Sheitan's cue, a sudden thought crossed my mind. So I began to walk a bit slower. When I found myself at the back of our procession, I took off my kerchief and keeping under parandja threw it to the ground. We reached the gates. The guards opened them and stepped aside letting us in. I didn't know yet if my kerchief has fallen to the ground, but I really wanted it to fall before we reach the gates and was afraid I didn't succeed. Inside the yard, having taken 10 steps I ventured to look back again. My kerchief was on the ground and this young man was about to bend and pick it up. I continued walking.

– You've lost your kerchief, sister!

My heart began to beat faster and I stopped. The young man came up to me smiling and handed my kerchief.

– Is it yours?

– Yes, it's mine! – I said taking the kerchief and forgetting to express my gratitude even.

Well, this was the end of our conversation. The young man went through the main palace gaits. And I, absolutely stupefied dawdled behind the girls. I've seen this djigit one step away from me, I heard his voice, his hand even touched mine ... Are you sleeping, Gulshan.

– No, I am not! What happened next?

– I'm telling you it. My heart beating madly I finally reached our yard. His words "Apa". You've lost your kerchief ... Is it yours? Kept ringing in my ears. His face stood up in front of my eyes and my heart began to beat faster. I've thought it over many times, but couldn't come up with

anything. My heart seemed to be doused in kerosene and set fire. I felt as if I'm drunk from this fire, my head kept spinning, mist covered my eyes, I couldn't understand what had come over me. What did I see this man for, why did I look at him? What did I drop my kerchief and he picked it up for? How come he enter the palace? He is a genie, the evil spirit, he wants me to lose my mind ... I wish I could meet him again! I'd asked everyone who'd gone with me to the sauna if they had seen that djigit. They said they had. So, I asked everyone "Do you want to see him again, does your heart burns from this desire of meeting him again?" They said "No". After all these enquires I'm adamant that he is a genie. I played with the evil spirit and he'd charmed me. Again and again I asked "Does this djigit work at our palace?" They said "No, he doesn't" "Have you seen him entering the yard behind us" - Again they say "No", which means I've fallen pray to an evil spirit. Tukhfa was laughing and said "Apparently you fell in love with wizard". I think it's so I fell in love with a wizard and he fell in love with me I began to wait for him. I thought, if it's all true, he would come and take me to the Magical Country. I've waited for him days and nights but he wouldn't come. After two week's time we again had to go to the sauna. I rejoiced and told myself: "Maybe today will I be able to follow him to the Land unknown". I was all aglow with impatience whenever I thought of it. The day came and we went to sauna. When on our way back from sauna we reached that place, where I'd met that djigit, my heart began to beat faster. If he appears and beckons me to follow him, I'll follow him. We've already reached that place, but alas, no signs of this magical young man. I looked around, looked into the side street - no one! But I was thinking of what to do if he appears ... Cold sweat broke onto my back from all this tension and I don't even know myself how I got left behind. After some time I heard auntie Nasiba crying for me. I came around

and joined the rest. Before reaching the gates of the palace I looked back several times.

Nazik sighed deeply and kept silent for few minutes.

– That's how I fell in love with magical young man, – she added. – It's already been three months that I love him, Gulshan-apa!

– You say, you love this magical young man? Ha-ha-ha!

– Why are you laughing, Gulshan-apa? If you don't believe me or my story, ask Tukhfa ...

– It's not that I don't believe your story, – said Gulshan continuing to laugh. – The thing is this wizard whom you love isn't a wizard at all.

Nazik lumped up.

– Who's he then?

– Human being.

– Human being? Have you seen him?

– Yes ... In our palace. Do you know who's the Head Scribe now?

– Yes, I do, his name's Anvar.

– Well, he's the "Wizard" you fell in love with.

Tukhfa laughed so loudly that several girls shuddered in their sleep.

– Turns out, you, Nazik fell in love with Mirza Anvar?

Nazik was literally stupefied.

– How come? Such a young man became the Head Scribe?

– Well, he deserves it, – she said.

– Is he married?

– Of course he isn't, – said Nazik, unusual sadness permeating her voice. – I've been deserted by that mad dog of the Khan, I ...

Gulshan kept silent.

Sleeping girls kept snoring slightly. Their snorings having been occasionally interrupted by the muffled crying.

MAHDUM'S NEW CRAFT

Solikh Mahdum left from inside. Among the people expecting the main clerk, he has seen also mullah Abdurahman.

– Welcome, Mullah, welcome!

– Hello!

Having greeted, Mahdum lead him into the livingroom.

– Well! How are you?

– Thank God! And your health?

– Praise all devinity! To that I am obliged, what stops of your favour have resulted you in my house?

– Your kind arrangement to me, – answered mullah Abdurahman. – If mister Anvar considers it possible, I would like to hope, to hold the post of the clerk...

– Very well, very well! – Mahdum said. What can prevent it? You have enough formation, only here are the papers to deal with ... Well Anvar, you will learn. It will not prevent. That is all about the calligraphy. That, I think, everything is all right.

– Well, that papers to make, I do not especially require a teacher, – with insult in his voice mullah Abdurahman said.

– If I also do not know all that; Anvar, anyway, only the little have less knowledge Mirzo...

– Very well, very well! However, in the office all consider that in comparison with other clerks and muftis, Anvar expresses more gracefully than others. Such are the fruits of knowledge at school. Yes, to study it is useful. You will be presented Mirzo to Anvar or on me on you to report?

– I do not know... However, I think, to tell you is better.

– Well, to resort to the help of the intermediary it is quite good too. I am quiet with it I will talk. All the same, after all it is necessary to explain, in what you studied, and say

that you are a capable person, – told Mahdum, having kept silent, and added: – Yes, in the palace office it is accepted to work at the beginning free of charge. Our Anvar also did not receive a salary in the beginning.

– The business is not in the salary, for your favor. The service in a mosque gives me the means for life.

– Alas! With means as it should be. If you learn well and quickly how to make the paper you will start to receive salary. Besides, the dialogue with the mighty of this world it will bring considerable advantage with the most important thing, – Mahdum, lowered his voice. – Serving at the mosque, you will not leave. Gee whizz you have thought up! You are to me as the son, and the will be closer our children to a court yard, the better and to us. Be quiet, mullah Abdurahman, I will transfer your request, I will put in for your word. Mirza Anvar will undoubtedly employ you.

Having thanked Solikh Mahdum, Mullah Abdurahman started to leave.

– When to come for your answer? To you, certainly?

– Alas! Tomorrow, after the morning prayer... Why are you leaving? Tea, bread...

– No, thanks, your favour.

Mahdum sent Mullah Abdurahman to the yard and returned expecting Anvar. He enquired about the health of each of them and asked, what was necessary for them from the main clerk. Dressed more in a rich way he asked also where their children studied. Also mentioned that they lived in the same district, then exclaimed his surprise why did not they study at his school.

– Have you arrived from a village? – He addressed him.

– Well, tell me, what «illness» do you have?

The farmer respectfully rose, having pressed hands on his breast.

– I have thirteen tantalus of land, mister. And the tax, obviously was mistaken, they counted thirty three hector! I wish to hand in the statement.

- Hm! - Exclaimed mahdum. - Don't you have a foreman in the village?

- He does not listen to my complaint. Mahdum again inspected the farmer from feet to head.

- And you know, brother that you have to write the statement, and you need money for it. Without money it is not necessary to worry...

The farmer clapped on his belt, as though showing, that he had money.

- Don't think, mister, I am not so fool to arrive without money.

Mahdum was delighted, having seen, that he had money, but also began to worry: he knew, that Anvar was disinterested in rich persons and didn't take money from poor farmer. He even taught the pupils, reproaching, then that they did not know the «taste of gold», but that was not resulted. And well knowing the «taste of gold» Solikh thought up new interesting work: all time while Anvar held reception, he sat in the corridor and asked everyone who left from the room: whether Anvar wrote the statement, or only gave advice, whether the applicant paid for it? And if it was found out, that he wished to pay, but Anvar refused to take money, Solikh spoke: «You would have given little money, leave how much you have, I will persuade him to accept». And took away from the applicants all their money.

He managed to take even from those who came to Anvar simply to say hello. Thus he still explained: «Even a cat does not leave on the sun to get warm for nothing! He was ashamed to say to you about money, give it to me, I will pass it them, I will say, that you did not know how to offer. It is useful if you need to address again to him».

Thus, using Anvar's free writing the statements and giving advice, Mahdum, for some weeks, was engaged in "new craft" - accumulating money. When applicants dis-

persed, he, gathering in his pockets silver, went inside and counted them, displaying separately kopecks, separately five-kopeck coins and especially selecting silver coins. Thus he cheerfully dared, thinking: «Eh, business is more important than words, only ninnies do not understand».

Certainly, he hid his "craft" from all and was especially afraid, that Anvar would find out it...

This day Solikh Mahdum left for the prayer before sunset when Anvar has already returned from the palace. It so disturbed Mahdum, that he left the mosque, not having stayed to the end. However much he had the luck to finish the affairs with Anvar before arrival of Mahdum. Being angry by sufi who was late with the appeal on the prayer, he passed inside; he noticed, that all applicants gathered, and stopped there as if waiting for someone. And soon from guestroom there appeared a person by the form similar to the imam. Mahdum looked at him in an unfriendly way, but there and then his face expression changed and he exclaimed:

– Hello, your favor! You desired to come...

– Hello, how are you, Solikh Mahdum? I got a deal with Mirzo Anvar. Give God a long life to him. He is a very kind, sensitive young man. I have asked to write the small statement. But, tell, how is your health, Mahdum?

Mahdum tried to be very affable, but did not dare ask money for the statement, because this person was the sufi and to demand from him money – all the same that the beggar would ask for a handout...

– Well, well, your favour I thank you, we ask very much, come in!

– I will come, I will come... I want to congratulate Mirza Anvar, and pray for him. You, Mahdum, also will not think to treat me and to receive my blessing. I told to mirzo Anvar: your service will not get off. You should treat. Mirzo is a generous person, he gave me the answer: «Only come, en-

tertainment does not happen behind the business». I heard that you, Mahdum, wish to marry your children. I asked mirzo, but he laughed... And did not tell anything plainly. But this business is good, do not hesitate with it. When is the wedding?

The sight of Mahdum expressed extreme impatience: because of long senseless conversation he could miss his favorable meeting.

-- Yes, we think, in the spring!

-- It's too long to wait. Well, everything is done in time. You would arrange a great feast? Will invite visitors from all ends of the city? Probably, you will be visited also by the wives of the Khan. The groom after all is not a little person. You need thousand of dressing gowns to present to all. Well, of course, and visitors will come to the wedding not with empty hands. Wives of the han will bring your daughter, probably, as a gift hundred of gold coins, and a slave in addition. Expense are great, I say.

This minute mahdum heard, that someone left the living-room. He like an uneasy horse, started to mark time. And all it was filled in with a nightingale.

-- Don't be afraid of anything. To sacred business, as they say God helps. Certainly, I mean this your wedding feast. All will ascend that we saw hitherto. But open your embrace wider. If God allows, I will come to you to help. You can't cope with the reception so many visitors as you didn't set used to it earlier. But such men, as we, for one day used to accept even five thousand visitors.

From the livingroom a woman quickly slipped away, Mahdum perplexedly looked at her, then at eshon.

-- Let your women not worry. May all women became skilled on weddings. If you will let us know a week before, with big pleasure I will send them for help... Yes, you are absent-minded, mahdum?! Perhaps, you feel bad?

Mahdum indeed had uneasy sight as from the living-room steps were heard again. A man left from Anvar recently.

– No, why do you think so?

– Well here, it means, do not worry about reception of visitors. And even before the wedding we will meet the you and we will talk about all with mirzo Anvar.

The peasant in the meantime bowed, passing by the dear persons, and passed the gates. Disturbed Mahdum left the eshon alone and called the peasant:

– Stop, brother!

The peasant stopped. And the sufi went on speaking:

– If you could, I am free this week, and Mirzo Anvar always has time for me. You needn't special preparations. Little of samsas¹ or mantis, all the same will be enough, if only it was tasty... When you will decide, send somebody from pupils to warn me...

– All right, your favour.

– Here we have agreed! You'd better also visit us. Good-bye, Mullah Solikh, good-bye, let blessing be over your head.

– Good-bye, your favour, good-bye! Mahdum has not gone, just went to the gate.

– What, brother, – Mahdum asked the peasant, – Did you ask to write the statement?

– No, your favour, their Excellency have written a document, here it is necessary to show to the land surveyor.

– That's good! – Mahdum said. – And did you pay for it?

– No. I gave money, but he did not take.

– It means you offered little...

Mahdum bit his tongue at that moment: from the living-room Anvar appeared and bowed to him.

Then he nodded to the peasant, with amazement looked at him, and muttered:

– You may go, if your affairs are done!

GOLDEN MEAN

The peasant hadn't understood what the words «you offered little» meant. In perplexity he left the house. And lost Mahdum has gone together with Anvar inside. Having passed silently several steps, he darted a cautious glance at his son and said:

– What a mad person! The whole hour he was busy with0 “entertainment”. He thinks only about meal and entertainment. Probably, he hinted about entertainment to you also?

Anvar nodded his head and smiled. Mahdum continued to complain:

– Greediness is a great defect. Knowledgeable Arabians say:

«Modesty should be respected, and the greedy ones – despised...» His late father was also such a man. «A dog pulled out what it has eaten» – the son is even worse. In their family one is worse than another. You have written charitable statement, well so leave us. No, he demands entertainment!

Anvar, laughing, while Mahdum grumbled:

– «You needn't special preparations. If only they cook something tasty, that will be enough». And if to prepare kebab, then what, will you refuse it? He says, that will the head of the wedding party. That he would be able to accept the guests.

With these words Mahdum entered. In the yard there was Rano, holding the hands of a child. Anvar following mahdum, approached to her and took the boy from her hands. She noticed, that the father was annoyed by something and looked at Anvar. The winked, letting know, that there was nothing serious.

Mahdum got up on the supa and sat, having exhaled: «My God, forgive us». He already left the mosque in a bad mood, and now it has deteriorated his patience. Whether a joke, thanks to this talker, he missed today's "earnings". And the peasant not only shirked payment of money, he still nearly dishonored him. And it is his guilty, this villain sufi! Mahdum did not hesitate in expressions, thinking about it.

Anvar, kindly amusing the child, actually talked to Rano, Nigorayim made a supper, and Mahdum, having consulted them agreed, called up Anvar.

– Come here, Anvar, we will have supper here... And you, Rano, look after brothers...Mansur, apparently, still in the street. At the same time close the gates, daughter!

Anvar, holding the child, sat down on edge of the supa. The child pulled out and murmured something in his language.

The child reached Mahdum, compressing and unclenching the slide.

– Come to me, good boy, come to me. Well, still he is innocent! Here he had been ill with measles... Du-du-du!

Rano returned with her brothers. Mahdum left the kid and started to pour boys by reproaches.

– Here you fools! If not to call you, you will not guess to come back home. Have a look at their dress! Did you roll in mud? Donkeys! Shake it off! Undress and clean up! Oh, oh, how it is a pity, such good clothes! What will we make with them, Anvar?

Having looked at the scared children, Anvar smiled and said:

– They will grow and become wiser.

– In the next world? Well even there I will set scolding! Rano, spread to the brother matrass, take the child and ask your mother, whether supper is ready? Let then she serves it.

Rano spread on matrass, and has gone to learn about palov.

– Anvar, welcome on matrass! And you, donkeys, go and on wash hands!

Children ran to the ditch. Anvar has gone after them. Water in the ditch was very muddy, so Anvar resulted children back and watered with pure water from a jug. Then began to wash himself. Mahdum cried from the supa:

– Rano, pour water on hands of your brother!

But Anvar did not wait for it; when she approached, he has already washed his hands.

– What a sluggish girl you are! – Mahdum become angry.

– If a person chokes with oat flour meal and will send you for water, until you come back he will choke and die!

Anvar and Rano laughed, and Mahdum smiled, probably, happily with the joke.

– Truly after all they say, Anvar that is better to be foot faster the beggar, than hand slower the handicraftsman.

Young men again burst out laughing, and Mahdum came to full delight.

Anvar sat down on the matrass, and Rano spread a table-cloth. Nigoroyim brought palov on a clay dish. All were accepted to meal.

Having swallowed the first handful, Mahdum began to praise the wife.

– Therefore a very tasty palov you cooked, – he told to Nigoroyim, smilingly, looked at Anvar.

– But it is necessary to observe a measure.

– Well, a lot of meat should be put into palov.

Rano openly laughed to the words of mother, Anvar turned away to hide a smile.

– Words of Khadis, the sacred book of Moslems, of course is for all! – Mahdum said. – As we are living this hour on Earth, we should show diligence. Khadis prepares us for the afterlife... But not to be zealous and excessive. The praye deprives us of force, the person loses the possibility to earn there is enough to contain a family. It breaks

a normal way of life. There is enough total, that the person carries out the laws ordered by religion. What does it mean? It means, it is necessary to adhere to the gold, the middle. Sacred laws are wonderful and charitable, and they are applied in a life. For example: you are going to put in palov twenty steps of meat; however, a golden coin means, you'll divide meat on two parts. And you'll put aside one half. Here occurs a miracle: for other day you again have meat for a dinner. The middle provided a two-day food. And here still as happens: the person has got used to eat well, but has run into need and he cannot buy some meat, from it suffers. Besides the person, got used to delicious food and felt deprived of it. It is ready to go on a crime, that to get tasty meal. It is quite possible. Why so left! Certainly, because of excesses, which it to itself allowed earlier.

Teaching Nigoroyim, Mahdum aspired to kill by one stone several birds. At the same time this stone could get to it: what would he answer, if somebody was sitting from now together with it for palov, asked whether the concept a gold enters the middle of behavior in a covered corridor today, let alone about days?

It is not known what there would be to tell. However, having studied science in madrasah, Mahdum did not become puzzled. He would open the book and, looking through it, found the pages saying about necessity to provide a family. He would find what was justified by special expenses what should be suffered. He would find instructions even that its self-interest pleasing to the god; still would shame what do not know, that the care of a family "means".

But with mahdum nobody argued, he did not object to him. Probably, by inexperience, and possibly, and for other reasons. Only the young men sitting against each other, smiling, have significantly exchanged glances.

Having uttered, Mahdum again turned all attention to palov. Not lifting the head, he long silently ate. Behind this business he s forgotten about the golden mean: Mahdum with each his handful took an excellent piece of meat while others rarely took little slices.

Having eaten almost half of palov, he, at last, raised his head and offered to Anvar to be more assiduously. Then shouted at the children who littered, and reproachfully addressed Rano:

– You eat little, my daughter!

– My appetite is unsatisfactory”, – Rano said.

Anvar and Nigoroyim burst out laughing.

– You don’t get into pocket for a word, daughter, – burst out laughing Mahdum. – But who eats so little and slowly, works badly.

– It means palov should be eaten for excellent?

– Yes! If the mouth does not burn. All have burst out laughing.

– By the way, – Mahdum said, having ceased to laugh, – I have a request to the main clerk, hardly I have not forgotten. Eh, eh... Here recently came... Mullah Abdurahman. I promised to him... He wanted to see you. It seems, he would like to get a job of the clerk, I have told, that I would talk with mirzo Anvar. I think, that he should take the job. He is also, apparently, competent mullah and has good soul of the person... Anvar became thoughtful.

– I cannot remember in any way who is Mullah Abdurahman?

– Yes well, our mullah Abdurahman? He came to bless you when you received the post. The clerk, the young imam!

Anvar shook his head.

– I remember nothing.

– All right, – Mahdum said, having blinked the right eye.

– That day your admirer, the weaver, came to congratulate you. Remember him?

– I remember!

– Well here, after him the young imam came. Remember now?

– Oh, yes! He studied at your school.

– Xabba! – Exclaimed Mahdum and addressed Nigoroyim.

– You also know him.

– How could I know him?

– He studied in Bukhara and sent matchmakers asking for Rano.

Nigoroyim affirmatively nodded and imperceptibly looked at Anvar.

Rano jarred on the words about matchmakers, stopped eating and, taking a towel, began to wipe hands.

It was not known, with what intention was told the matter about matchmakers, but Anvar having jealous feeling and not paying attention at Mahdum asked Rano to give him the towel.

– Why do you wipe your hands, Anvar? You ate nothing for the whole day... Really you got sated quickly?

Anvar thanked Nigoroyim, and said, that he was full, and nodded to the child, – «Here supposedly what affairs»...

– Anvar and Rano are made of one dough, – Mahdum said, eating palov (it was visible, he did not reach the “Golden mean”) – Both of them eat equally little.

By this joke Mahdum wished to eliminate the awkwardness which had arisen from conversation on matchmakers. The youth smiled warmly to each other, Nigoroyim also felt good.

– What do you say, Anvar? Will you admit Abdurahman to your office? – Asked Mahdum.

– At the present we do not have a need for the clerks.

– I think nevertheless, such person shouldn't be missed. Having studied at your place, having received your experience, such people work hard. And to concern you there with strangers. Here, Anvar, my opinion.

– I will think!

– To think, of course, is not bad. But I already have considered for a long time. My conclusion is that: the nearer you will work with the people like mirzo Sultonali, the better it will be for you.

– Perhaps, you are right...

Anvar steadfastly examined the cloth. Rano also attentively looked at Anvar, understanding, that under his unwillingness to give the positive answer something was hidden.

Nigoroyim fed Mansur with palov and listened to the conversation.

Mahdum asked for a towel.

– I have judged correctly, Anvar. Do not doubt. He picked from the cloth little pieces of bread and threw it into his mouth.

– Admit mullah Abdurahman. He is ready to work for some time even free of charge. Agree?

– Business is not in payment...

– And in what?

– If I admit the new clerk, whether the old employees would take offence. Here what confuses me.

– For some time he will work free of charge, is it a problem to them? What will they lose?

– And in a couple of months they will have a contender. Especially I think about our Muftis Shahodat... You know his character.

– Yes, he is a dog, your Mufti Shahodat, – Mahdum exclaimed. – Here it seems to me, that we should protect against him. You are young still, my son! Really you need someone's permission to accept the new clerk?

– No.

– Well then! «That it is necessary the karnay player blows just once in the karnay?» Tomorrow I will tell him, so that he would visit you.

– It would not be in time... I should consult first.

– Well, consult with them. But it is necessary to employ him all the same!

Mahdum read a prayer and started to gather things for the mosque, the hour of the evening prayer came. Leaving on, he remembered eshon Gazi with his silly chatter prospective wedding, about visitors who would come to wedding, about khan's wives, and the main thing – about numerous money-gifts from them... Where to put them? Already at the mosque when Sufi was reading the prayer, Mahdum thought about the servant, that could be presented to Rano. One more superfluous mouth in the house was awfull.

35

THE KHAN WISHES TO HAVE A GOOD TIME

It was September, but the weather still was hot. It was Friday. In the middle of the swept, watered garden of the palace there was big supa. It was covered with a red carpet with the tulips weaved on it. On the carpet a velvet matrass laid and over it the skin of a lion was thrown.

Now this supa was empty, there was no khan and his confidants. But all small supas standing opposite have been filled. On them viziers, military leaders, the Supreme judges, sheikhs-ulislam¹, judges, the higher and city clergy, scientists-eshons, the court nobility both the lowest ranks-kurbashi and chiefs of areas sat. Ecclesiastics dressed in dressing gowns made from the silk, white majestic turbans on heads; viziers and military leaders dressed in velvet and silk dressing gowns, turbans, and on some of them into caps from astrakhan fur.

Today, before the Friday prayer, the khan intended to have a good time. Therefore, all the nobility were gathered here. Having directed looks to magnificently trimmed inter-

nal gates of the palace, they were waiting for the exit of his majesty.

A little further in the khan supa there was a tent made of cane. Some person were sitting and talking there.

At last, from the palace gate left Dervish-hudaychi. He made a sign to all to rise, then approached to the gates, rose sideways and made a bow.

Dressed in fitting pot-belly dressing gown, having lowered on his forehead a white silk turban, Hudoyarkhan appeared. All the nobility inclined before him. The khan was followed by his younger son Urmanbek in red velvet clothes. In red cloth the armed bodyguards have been dressed following the young successor beautifully, as on the selection. These seventeen-year-old handsome men went in numbers of ten by four abreast.

The khan approached the supa.

Suddenly from one low supa music was heard. Musicians have played a gentle melody «Sarbozcha». At his repetition, all retinue of the khan started singing such play:

Yes you will be happy in everything, our king!

Your glory will plunge enemies into ashes!

Let the field is full of enemy camp,

– Our mighty our khan will disseminate.

You will be a victim, Oh Shahimardon,

All those who sacred profanes the Koran!.

Yes you will be happy in everything, our king!

Your glory will plunge enemies into ashes!

The khan raised on steps to the supa. Ormonbek followed him. Young bodyguards, having bypassed the supa, started to be built duly for protection of his majesty.

The khan sat down on a lion's skin and specified to Ormonbek a place to the right of himself. Present people continued to stand having inclined. Bodyguards surrounded the khan from three sides. The khan made a sign respectfully

inclined, resolving him to lift heads. All were straightened and have crossed hands on breasts. The music stopped.

Udaychi man got on the supa and uplifted hands for the prayer, all repeated after him.

– Let our enemies and traitors disappear! Give, My God, to our sovereign and his country prosperity and wealth!

Having prayed, all have wiped hands on their faces. The khan made a sign to khudoychi, and he exclaimed:

– Mingbashi, qushbegi, otaliq, sheikhs-ul-Islam and other noble men, his majesty the khan invites you to sit down next to him.

The nobles called by khudaychi as one behind another began to rise on supa.

They were standing around it. The khan again told something to hudoychi.

– His majesty allows us to sit down!

Everybody, except the bodyguards, with noise started to take seats. Here and there cough was heard. And here khudoychi addressed the khan:

– Let Allah bless his majesty and glorify his state... One of your slaves addresses to you with a request, will you accept it?

The khan allowed and called the applicant. All looked towards the cane tent. From there was a tall person with a black beard, dressed in a light brown dressing gown and a turban, with the end lowered the quarter. That man walked slowly and importantly. At the supa he stopped. Every one, beside the khan, smiled, and he having corrected his turban and smoothed his moustache and beard, shook off the dressing gown, then turned and bowed his head before the khan.

The khan and all nobility laughed loudly, they recognized the favorite clown Zakir, with his nickname "bull".

Zokir raised his head and as if praying for the peace of someone's soul, bowed towards both parties. All again burst out laughing.

Khudoychi, standing at the other side of the ladder, said to the clown:

– Do not forget, in whose presence you are! Zokir was motionless, having pressed his hands on his breast, and darted a glance only at khudoychi.

– I know, I am not a fool!

– What is further?

– I've got a request to my khan. Again the laughter filled the yard.

– I consider. You think it is impossible?! Whether I should be hung up like a madman Dzhabbar?

– For that time that you came with the request, it was possible already to cook palov!

– And I also have cooked the request in my mind. After all from undercooked palav the stomach will ache, isn't it?

– Why have not you compiled your request on your way?

– Has he become crazy? – Exclaimed Zokir. – There are other worries to think about on my way here!

– And of what have you thought?

– Going to the khan, I prepared for death, thought of my children who would be deserted, and about their mother who then would marry in a hurry.

– It's useless chatter! His majesty and all these important noble men are waiting...

– Ha-ha-ha-ha! – Laughed Zokir. – You keep waiting every day for thousands of people at the palace, so why can't you wait for me a little?! Hi-hi-hi-hi... Your majesty, I have a request!

The khan nodded by his head that meant «speak!»

– First my request is to his majesty – kick that man away! His croaking is more feasible than your terrible words! (Laughter).

Hudoyar-khan made a sign to khudaychi – to rise on the supa. Zokir raised his hands in a prayer.

– Let our majesty not know tears, grief and needs! Let his camp be eternally harmonious, and bent. Three deaths to his enemies! Let dawn upon a young head on glacier of happiness of a long life and prosperity on a throne of his fatherland! And let the khan's servants, who wear both dark blue turbans, and light brown plaited white bread, heart always be light and as their hairs grey! Amin, amin! And still we ask to condescend to us, wandering the din, lost the way, lost reason, to us, to the talk of the town, in grief and grief wandering on to another's country.... The earth, that is filled with authority, as if Iskandar, the second, the well of all wealth, brain and bread of the native country. It is boundless in kind and will anger, the most terrible more than death.... It the friend and the defender of lonely, eternal wanderers, us, poor men, nothing falls from the sky. Constantly we think where to get a bread piece. We are greedy. We search for livelihood, and under this shade have come to show art and diligence. Perhaps we will consider possible to pay for it though only a penny?

– All right, – the khan said under the general laughter.
– Show your art.

36

CLOWNS

Zokir bowed to the khan, went to the tent and cried out loudly:

– Bahrambay, hey, Bahrambay!

From the tent a person left, without a cap, in a dirty shirt, from under which his naked body looked out. One foot was put on, another one barefooted. With one hand he held outskirts of the trousers while another hand scratched his shoulder.

– What is it, unless a donkey is roaring? – Bahram cried out, looking at the sides. – What? Unless the sister got di-

vorced from her husband, all my louses dispersed, - he grumbled, observing the seams of the shirt.

Audience burst out laughing.

- Bahram, look at me!

- Ah, Zakir-aka, is it you? What happened?

- I persuaded the khan.

- Persuaded? I said after all, that the khan is a rag.
(Again there was laughter).

- And where are they? - Asked Zakir.

- They are here, inside, - answered Bahrambay, nod-
ding to the tent.

- What are they doing? The laughter became louder.

- When will you grow wiser at last? - Zokir got angry. -
How will you leave now to the khan in one shoe?!

Bahram became thoughtful, scratching a nape.

- There is nothing to do. I will leave after all. The khan
is the same human being, like me!

Again there was an explosion of laughter.

- Well, damn you, lead them here! Be quicker!

Bahram again scratched his shoulder and, splashing one shoe, entered the tent. Soon he appeared, leading two more clowns. One of them was a short thick person. As round as the axis of the bullock cart, on his body there was a head similar to a big pumpkin, hollowed for water. Under his throat at the craw, the size of a melon it was blown up. It seemed, that instead of eyes on his face there were dried apricots, instead of a mouth - a shoe. The nose was similar to a monstrous frog. Ears stuck out, as pelvis. And look at his beard and moustaches! And eyebrows! It is better not to speak about them at all. So, little sticken out here and there. Besides this, his speckled face was generously covered by freckles. In addition, he has been dressed in short dressing gown from rags.

The second person was middle aged, he was by contrast tall and thin. Narrow, as a licked spoon, his face had

cross-eyes. His dressing gown seemed longer, than he, on his head a high darvesh cap, he was barefooted. This clown was called Davlat.

– Hey you, mongrels, – Zokir met them, shouting and swinging with hand. – Shorten your appetites! Whether your wives would divorce you if you shorten your appetites? Where is his shoe?

Bahrom stood, sadly having inclined his head. Davlat and Bahtiyor exchanged glances, wiping their mouths.

– Speak!

– No, you speak!

– And what to say?

– Tell, that we did not eat it...

Bahtiyor put both hands on his belt, straightened, and threw back his head and fell asleep.

– Hey brother, we didn't eat it! Zokir silently approached him, and seized him by his craw.

– Here, brother, the back of a shoe got stuck here, – he said.

Under general laughter Zokir started talking absolutely in different tone:

– Now we will go to the khan. Behave properly beside him, be polite. As soon as you appear before him, make a low bow, read a prayer. Hear me? Well. Follow me!

All three of them, like a chain, moved behind him. At the ladder Zokir stopped. The others, being pushed with the friends and awkwardly being trampled down, also stood. But they stood anyhow, so that one even stood with his back to the khan.

Zokir, having noticed nothing, solemnly said:

– Your slaves have come to you to bow. Laughter was heard.

Only now Zokir noticed how they stood, and hastily turned them to face the khan.

– Ah you idiots, confused, ah! Bow at once to the one who sits before you.

They bowed, but it caused new explosion of laughter because they bowed, only not to the khan.

Zokir asked pardons for the khan and cried out:

– To whom did you bow?

– To the one who sits before us.

– Gather yourselves! Pray more likely! Pray!

All three lifted hands, but have not said words. A little later they began to push each other by elbows, saying:

– Well, you pray, you!

But so anything was done.

Everybody laughed loudly. And Zokir, seeing, that business is bad, lifted his hands for the pray:

– Say «amin», bulls! – He said.

All murmured: «amin, amin», and Zokir continued:

– Accept, Allah, our prayer... Here are the divines – Bahtiyor, Davlat, Bahram. Take their souls, relieve people of these evil spirits, amin!

Bahrom, Bahtiyor and Davlat all prayed together with him. Again people loudly burst out laughing. Having prayed, Zokir again addressed to them:

– Ask the khan! Why are you standing here and staring?!

All three again pushed each other, about something among themselves. Davlat made a sign and said sitting on supa, and Bahrom loudly started talking:

– As we were very frighten of all these turbans, bayonets, sabres... Davlat said, that they all are cannibals.

– To hell your entreaties! – Exclaimed Zokir, having slapped himself on his knees. – Go away, or you will be eaten here!

With shouts “help” all three ran in different ways. Bahtiyor stumbled about feet of Davlat and fell, having caused loud laughter of spectators. Bahrom and Davlat escaped to the tent... Zokir seized Bahtiyor.

– Oh, brother, release me, do not ruin me, I have children! – Began to whimper Bahtiyor.

– Let us not eat you!

– We will eat, brother, we will by all means eat. Look at the eyes of that bek? Oh-oh, what eyes! Release me!

The laughter did not stop.

– I just told you to blurt out!

– You have a tooth on me, brother! That teacher is a real cannibal! He will not even undress me, he will eat with clothes! And if you wish to know the truth, I don't believe the khan!

Bakhtiyor pulled out from hands of Zokir and ran to the tent. That one also rushed off behind him and disappeared in the tent.

After a while Davlat left, he changed clothes, with a turban on his head and in leather shoe. In his hands he held something similar to a prayer mat. Having bowed to the khan, he said:

– The sheikh-ul-Islam desired to arrive here.

The khan looked at Valihan-tura who was sitting near the teacher Niyoz.

The sheikh-ul-Islam, being perplexed, darted a slanting glance at Davlat, as though asking: «Why have you started it?» And Davlat, standing beside the prayer mat, by a gesture has shown, that happened nothing and returned to the tent.

Here all have understood that they would show Valihan-tura. Spectators quickened, started to whisper, and exchange wink. The eyes of all have been chained to the tent. And here, in a dressing gown made of benar silks, with a staff in the right hand and with the book rolled in a small knot, in left, there was the sheikh-ul-Islam Valihan-tura. He looked like Valihan-tura, went his gait. All continually exchanged sights. And sitting near to the khan real Valihan-tura, having reddened, all time repeated: «God save us!»

In the meantime the newly appeared sheikh-ul-Islam stopped, stuck into something, as though investigating, by

the stick's end flung away aside something and continued his way.

People laughed loudly, Valihan-round also laughed himself, having exclaimed: «God save us!» Zokir was his exact copy. Having reached the prayer mat, he put the stick near to the stick of Valihan-tura, took off his shoes and stepped on the mat. Then he sat down, put the book on his knees. He whispered something, while stroking his face with hands, looked around and shouted:

– Mirzo Hamdam, hey, Mirzo Hamdam!

Here the mullahs, surrounding sheikh-ul-Islam laughed especially loudly.

– Hey, Mirzo Hamdam!

Bahrom left the tent dressed in clothes of the mullah.

– What will you order? – He asked, having approached sheikh-ul-Islam and bowed. That one looked at shoe, standing beside.

– Wipe my shoe, Mirzo Hamdam.

The mullah, having taken out from the pocket a handkerchief, began assiduously carry out the order.

Meanwhile, from the tent Bakhtiyor left, also dressed as the mullah. Having approached to shejhul-Islam, he bowed.

– Hello, – Welcomed him «Valihan », having inspected him from feet to head. – Sit down, young man, sit down!

– Well, what you will tell, sonny?

– I... I have the request, master... Our khan constructed a madrasah... I thirst to learn science... I came from a village. I ask you, give me a chamber there.

– Well... Well... Where are you from?

– From Altarik, master...

– It is a pity, it is a pity, – sheikh-ul-Islam complained, – You were late, all chambers are already occupied by pupils.

– But I am ready to live with students, – obsequiously said Bahtiyor.

– I am from the village, and not afraid of narrow spaces, master!

– So, so... Now all chambers are filled by students, there is no place to move, there is no place for the sunflower seed to fall... I am speaking the truth, darling...

Real Valihan-tura understood what the business was, even strongly sweated. Bahtiyar-student sadly read a pray and went away. So-called mirzo Hamdam spat on shoes, cleaned them and then sat opposite to the bek. On the other hand this time Davlat approached.

– Hello, sacred father, – He said, taking off his shoes.

– How are you, whether you are healthy, whether you are safe?

– Thank God, thank God!

Not expecting the invitation, Davlat sat near to the «sacred father».

– I have a request, sacred father...

– Please! Speak!

– To tell the truth, I wish to ask for a chamber. Sacred father!

– Here is how! And where are you from?

– I am from Chust, mister, your fellow is countryman.

– Whose son?

– Masters Mohammed...

– Well, well, – «sacred father» said and ordered «mirzo Hamdam»: – Give to this person a chamber!

Davlat read a pray and left. Playing the role of the pupil from Kokand, Bakhtiyor appeared. He said: "As well as I came from Altiariq, I received refusal – «We do not lie, even the seed of sunflower has no place to fall». So he went home. Davlat again came in the role of the applicant from Chust, and mirzo Hamdam ordered – «Give him a chamber».

The khan and teacher Niyoz laughed to tears loudly. And Valihan-tura continually wiped his perspiration.

Zokir bowed to the khan and left to his "pupils".

Representation proceeded.

CONSPIRATORS

It was January in severe winter. In each of the two rooms of the khan's offices little sandals were adjusted. In each of them there sit four clerks. They wrote and corrected papers.

Anvar was called to the khan. A half an hour already passed, he did not leave there from. Sitting at one of the sandals mufti Shahodat, mullah Abdurahman and mirzo Kalonshoh were silently whispering about something. Anvar came in, and they, having interrupted the conversation, began their work.

– Kh-kh-kh-kh, what order have you received, mirzo Anvar? – Shahodat asked, having coughed.

– Nothing special, – Anvar answered, sitting down at the sandal.

– It is necessary to write letters to governors of Osh and Andizhan... Brother mullah Abdurahman, how many copies have you prepared?

Mullah Abdurahman counted the papers laying before him.

– Three.

– Write one more and it will be enough. I hope you have not written down, the names of the collector of taxes?

– Not yet.

– Very well, I will write down myself. Finish quickly all affairs, there is still work for you. And you, sir, here I have a request, – Anvar addressed mufti Shahodatu, – It is necessary to write the statement to lord Abdushukur who came yesterday. All the time he goes, mutters something, I have understood nothing from his words. You, probably, know him better, what's his claim.

– Eh, let put aside him, – the mufti snapped. – How many times has he addressed me for the help? Never, as I remember, he was not paid for work.

– Now I am the guarantee that he will pay.

– Well, if I did not manage to receive money, hardly you would do that.

– If he does not pay, I will give money myself. Just relieve me from him!

– Mufti kept silence. Anvar has gone deep into the papers. Then Shahodat quietly pushed his neighbour Abdurahman, winked to him, smiling – «here are what affairs». And in that smile accompanying this sight, it was possible to read: «As you see, the main clerk without us cannot write even a statement». Mullah Abdurahman, having raised his head from his papers, also smiled. Observing them Mirzo Kalonshoh made with hands such a gesture as though he clamped karnay which was directed towards Anvar. At this minute Mirzo Sultonali entered and steadfastly looked at Kalonshoh.

– Not a bad wriggle, I congratulate you!

Anvar prevented from working looked on:

– What happened?

– Nothing, – He answered, smiling, but his eyes burnt with anger. – I have come for that document...

Anvar rummaged through his papers and pulled out a statement.

– Answer should be, as I said.

– All right.

As he left, he once again looked at the clerks who were amused at his occurrence. Now all three of them diligently worked. He left, and after a while Shahodat raised his head and looked at Anvar who has gone deep into work. He then exchanged glances with Kalonshoh, and there was reproach in his sight: "It turned out badly", Shahodat shook his head. And without getting pale, he turned even more pale, also went deep into work.

Under petition of Solikh-Mahdum Abdurahman eventually was accepted to the post at the palace. Here for three months he had been working as the clerk for Anvar, and from the second month he started to receive a salary, five gold coins a month. At first, being as other thought, under the protection of Anvar, he served honesty. But in the same time he converged with Shahodat, Kalonshah and other similar people. However, there was no friendship between them, all of them assumed, that Abdurahman was the clerk of Anvar, and were afraid to stir superfluous. After a month later he got his salary, they were even more assured of correctness of the assumption. But the behaviour of Abdurahman forced them to become thoughtful. So, for example, while copying papers made by Anvar, he paid attention that there were no Arabian and Persian words and expressions. Thus he, as if laughing at Anvar, meant the Arabian saying: «Not-salted meal».

Muftis guessed whether those sneers were sincere or not? Feeling offended, these envious people, in turn, screwed any poisonous proverb, pretending, that they spoke simply without hints of its figurative sense. So, sometimes Shahodat, ostensibly having got tired of work, spoke, sighing: «the Lion dies in a wood of hunger, and a dog is fed with the horse». Kalonshah picked up: «A Pig has rest on a mattress, while wise men should sleep on the ground».

Whether mullah Abdurahman guessed or not at whom they laughed, he artfully just smiled. So they tested mullah Abdurahman for the second month of his work. He also did not lose time: by hints, gestures, sighs he let them know, that he understands them and sympathises with them. Definitely having convinced of it, both muftis started to win round openly the beginner though the person has invited him to work. Gradually, having believed in his friendship, they made him their accomplice.

As always, the papers arriving from the court were the main source of sneers. It was necessary to Anvar to charge for the lack of time to answer the statement, as they have already exchanged smiles, speaking: «It's not on a teeth to the main clerk!»

So, under influence of muftis, mullah Abdurahman has very soon forgotten about goodness, made by Anvar. Besides he had no objection to laugh at him and belittling him, he got a great pleasure.

Anvar knew well enough, that muftis liked to laugh at him, but he did not suspect about the participation of Abdurahman in these conversations. Only Sultan guessed it. Once he told Anvar: «From mullah Abdurahman there is no use to us. There you have two mad dogs, and now you brought the third one!»

Anvar usually left work last. This evening everybody had already gone home, but these two muftis still remained in the office. They understood, that they did not wish him to leave with the main clerk alone. He said goodbye and left. Only then they began to gather.

In the yard it was cold. Snow with thickness of four fingers covered the street. Usually for Kokand sharp frosty wind with snowflakes painfully pricked faces. People put on fur caps, rolled up turbans on foreheads and ears, raised dressing gowns' edge to noses. Along the street people ran with speed as if they could miss something. The snow and frost filled everybody's shoes, not distinguishing between the footwear of rich beks or simple footwear of the poor men and handicraftsmen. Both elegant boots and simple leather shoes creaked equally loudly. And even the wooden footwear on some ones were also squeaked rather pleasantly.

SOUL OF THE POOR MAN

Anvar did not run, as everybody, but went by quick steps. At the brick bridge «Brick tower» over a shallow river, beside a small house ashore a watchman stood, dressed in a sheepskin coat. Having seen Anvar, he approached nearer, bowed and said:

– Your favour, I guess, you are frozen... We've got a fireplace inside.

Anvar put out his nose under the dressing gown, smiled and went into the door from where there was smoke. The watchman passed forward to open the door, and Anvar followed him into a witness mark. It all turned black from soot. On the floor in the middle of the room fire burnt; its flame pulled out through the hole made in the ceiling. At the fireplace Sultanali was sitting, turning fire wood by a stick, correcting the flame.

– You have also stiffened by freeze? – Anvar asked, laughing.

– Aa one woman said, her darling is a fire-burning man... Apparently, fire is as hot as embraces of the ardent young man. Well, sit down!

Obedying to the invitations of Sultanali and his guards, Anvar sat down at the fireplace on the old mat and stretched his hands near the fire.

– And you sit down! Why are you standing? – Anvar addressed to the guards, respectfully facing him.

After that invitation the watchman sat down and moved the fire with an iron stick.

– Hard frost! – Anvar exclaimed, having warmed a little. – So you also left the palace and at once have come across fire?

– I thought, that I will absolutely stiffen, while reach home, – he told. – Here I saw the smoke from a flue of Tair-

aka, and opened the door... Here simply good fortune! Perhaps it was importunate, but nevertheless I came inside. And you were invited by Tairaka? Perhaps, he will treat us with tea?

Tair even more closely put the iron stick into fire.

– Now we will make, your favour, now. Water already begins to boil... And we have good green tea.

– Well, if you are going to drink, then make, – Anvar said. – But especially for me you needn't do that, I will soon leave.

– Where? To leave such good fire!

– Home... Maybe somebody is waiting for me.

– Who could come in such cold? Tairaka, make tea, we will not release the main clerk!

– I obey your favour! Let them have a drink of tea of poor men, – Tair said, taking from the corner handful of chips and having thrown them into fire. Then he removed from fire boiling pot, overflowing the iron and made a tub.

– It is impossible to leave from such a fire, – he said. – Drink one-two cups of tea and listen, what Tair-aka will say.

Anvar smiled. Tair removed from a peg hammered into the wall, small knot, has taken out from some flat cakes, a handful of Kurgan raisins and put all it on a tray.

– Poverty, your favour, – He said in an apologising voice, putting the tray before Anvar. – There is no treatment worth you...

– Nothing... I like to sit and drink tea here in such a dark room, directly at the fireplace, – Anvar assured.

– There is a charm to it, – Sultan-ali picked up also.

– Yes, yes, something poetic, darvish, – Anvar told. – In my childhood when I was an orphan, I lived in precisely such conditions at my sister's. Her husband was a poor handicraftsman. In winter in their house such fire burnt down and we, sitting at its fire, drank tea. I carefully store all it in the memory and I remember with love.

Tair-aka stretched to Anvar a clay cup with tea. Burning down chips in fire have flashed at last by a high flame. In darkness a witness mark it became light from scattered sparks.

– Have you a family, children, Tair-aka?

– No, your favour! Here I live lonely... I pray for people's prosperity.

– Tair-aka is similar to you, – Sultan ali burst out laughing.

– What for you have postponed the wedding for spring? You will spend winter in loneliness, just as he. Badly!

– But I like such life. Without cars, isn't that so, Tair-aka?

Tair-aka stirred the stick into the fire.

– But even the poor have to live in a family, your favour.

– What for?

Still stirring coals with the stick, Tair-aka kept silent. Then, having shaken the sparks which have flown in his beard and moustaches, he said:

– If God sends a child, he will help you when you get an old age. – Tair-aka again corrected the flare. – And here I do not have anybody. I am already fifty, your favour. While I have force, I can care about myself. But the time will come; I will lose my force, who will look after me then? I can be ill, who will give me a spoon of waters then? And when the time comes, the death will take me and God will take me away... I will close my eyes, I will die at any corner and who will know about it? Nobody! And if the man has children, such will not happen anyway!

– Your truth! – Sultan ali exclaimed. – Really, the century does not know, what waits us ahead. And if there are children, that is hope.

Anvar became thoughtful, and kept silent. Having drunk tea, he stretched the cup to Tair and told:

– Well, maybe we should marry you?

Tair-aka gratefully smiled.

– Eh, your favour, – he said, – It's already late.

– Why?

– Look at my beard, there is a smell of death.

– It's not so. You look younger than us.

– The soul grew old, your favor, my soul, – told Tair-aka, putting his hand to his heart. – My soul needs only rest... And when it will come, it is not known.

The conversation was interrupted at that point. Anvar looked at him and knowingly nodded his head.

Tair-aka chose coals from the ashes and threw them back into the fire. The fire lost the recent heat, its flame silently fluctuated, smoking a dark blue smoke. Ashes together with smoke flew away from the bottom, the burnt down boughs turned in the corner...

As if having agreed they just silently looked at the burning down fire.

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«OH, WISE MAN, BE CAREFUL!»

– I guess, muftis have left after me, mirzo Anvar? – Sultan ali asked.

It is not known, whether these words reached Anvar who sank into thoughts, but he nodded his head.

– When I have said goodbye to you, left for the street, your friend mullah Abdurahman had been already waiting for them. Obviously, they were going to continue the conversation.

Anvar, coming out of the thought, unwillingly turned.

– What kind of conversation?

– Well, actually, not the conversation, but gossip. Anvar burst out laughing.

– You hate mullah Abdurahman.

– Yes, I have for what. He behaves in unseemly way: pretending to be your friend, he behaves as your enemy.

– We do not know, what he has in his soul.

– Anyway, not kindness. This lizard is not a friend to us.

– Well then who? – Anvar smiled again.

– Say, are muftis enemies or friends?

– Perhaps, enemies. But we are not enemies to them.

– What nonsense! – Exclaimed Sultonoy. – If the man, thanks you, got a job and then only whispers with your enemies, kisses their mouth and nose... What should we think of such a person? He is either an enemy or a fool. But mullah Abdurahman is not the fool, he had plenty of such affairs, he is an old bird! The conclusion is one: he is the enemy. If you are not convinced by my words, the address to wisdom of sheikh Saadi, he says: «Ah, wise man, be careful of the friend who talks with your enemy!»

– Unless I consider Mullah Abdurahman a good person?

– You, maybe, do not consider, however you are treating him undeservedly well. It allows an occasion to become impudent to those swindlers.

– And what do you think: how should I treat him? – Anvar asked, taking from the tray two raisins.

– Mullah Abdurahman should be kicked away from the palace, let him carry out his religious rite at a mosque. And for muftis there will be posts at the kazy-khan.

Anvar laughed, having shaken his head. Tair-aka spread a mat for the evening prayer. Sultonali has also risen from the place and carrying out the imam's rules all three of them started to pray.

Having prayed, they again sat down at the fireplace.

– Unless it's so difficult to drive them away? – Asked Sultonali.

– It's easy to drive them away, but it's too easy! – Anvar laughed. – Your words remind me one person. The good, fair person... One of the parishioners of Mullah Abdurahman.

His name... Ah yes, his name is Safar, the weaver. Yesterday, having returned from the palace, I have found him at home. «Please, enter, Safar-aka», – I speak. And he being excited, said, as if he heard from a friend of mullah Abdurahman, how the mullah told: «Water will soon rush under Mirzo Anvar». «What does it mean? – The weaver completely upsetly asked me, – Why water should rush under me?» «Well, – I said, – while it is dry under me... And if water rushes, will you teach me to weave?» He did not answer this question, and repeated the same, as you: «Our imam, a dirty gossip, he should be banished!» Well – how, Sultan ali, do you like these words?

– Yes, this person is your sincere friend, – He confidently said. – I am convinced, that this scorpion, mullah who devoured a lizard, conceals against you in his heart. God knows what kind of black thoughts.

Tair, silently mixing fire coals, suddenly asked:

– Safar-weaver, whether is that thin, tall man, your favour?

– Yes, he is.

– He is my friend. We with him worked every summer as part time workers. Good fellow!

– Clearly, – he rapped out. – All is clear. – Abdurahman in rage and vindictiveness does not concede to your muftis. He forgot goodness made by you!

– The proverb says: «Make good business and throw it into the river: if it is not not estimated by fish, God will estimate». And what is said by Fuzuli? «The world is a market where everyone praises the goods». We are also the goods, we are sold at the market, but muftis, having rummaged in the chest, find nothing better than dirty gossip...

– It is so, Mirzo Anvar, but nevertheless it is necessary to defend oneself from enemies or not?

– And what could enemies do! – Anvar burst out laughing. – If they wish to take the place of the main clerk, I will

help them. I understand, you are revolted with their unscrupulous behaviour. I am also not an angel, I have not fallen from the moon, I am angered also by gossips which they try to entangle me, wound my self-esteem. I also tend to think to expel them from the palace. But something keeps me from it: first, I do not wish to be equal to them, it is humiliating; secondly, how will look to the people? «Recently I occupied this place and already expelled them, who worked for thirty years ». Such conversations will by all means begin among the people. It is good if they leave silently, easily, but what if they suddenly address to the khan, and the khan will return them their posts, how many time then their rage and vindictiveness will increase?! As to mullah Abdurahman, in the beginning I was against his invitation to work. But here, as I already spoke to you, one person who could not give up interfered... And I have been compelled to accept him. Mullah Abdurahman has taken the side of dirty people, and it will be easy to get rid of him... But, in my opinion, nevertheless we should not follow it. Certainly, we should make him to work, but the time is left, and he has not worked for three months yet, to fire him? Very awkwardly! We cannot correct his dirty past already, eventually, everyone eats what he had chosen.

Sultan ali has not found objections about the muftis, but insisted on the dismissal of Abdurahman.

– Well, – he said, – Let muftis grumble any time, but the mullah should be fired!

– Dismissal of this worm will serve as a good lesson for the others.

Anvar grinned.

– Why do you so strongly dislike my “friend”?

– Yes, yes, – Sultan ali strictly said. – If you do not drive him at least, I will leave. I suffered seeing the physiognomies of muftis, but still the third rascal is opposite to me, I absolutely left myself.

Sultonali did not joke. Anvar understood that it was impossible to contradict him already.

– Well, – he said, – if you consider necessary, we will get rid of him.

– Wonderful! – Sultan ali was delighted. – And one more wish: from tomorrow transfer me to yourself. Then muftis cannot gossip, grimace all day long.

– It is also possible, – Anvar again burst out laughing. – The poor people! In my absence they unburdened their hearts, and you wish to deprive them. Here you oppressor!

Sultonali remained serious still.

– We should answer by the same coin. Friends began to leave. Anvar took out from a purse a golden coin and stretched Tair. He took the coin, but immediately returned it back, saying:

– It is a shame, shame to take!

It is not for you, – Anvar said, taking away his hand, – You'll buy with this money fire wood, raisins, and if left, some tea. When we will come to you with Mirzo Sultan Ali, you will make for us big fire...

– But I have everything that is necessary for you, it will be.

Anvar did not take back money. Tair-aka looked enquiringly as if consulting – what to do? Sultan ali blinked, as though answering: «Take with thanks!»

Tair-aka read a prayer and the friends left.

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THE LITTLE SPY

Here several days as Safar-weaver had been cheerful. «Thanks to me Mullah Abdurahman was fired, – he thought, laughing. – Such haughty, important people softened, like a flat cake which fell into water. And now you stretch your legs according to your mats».

Having met in the street poor Samad, he said: «So, under the main clerk water has gone...You were right, Samad!»

The matter is that Safar heard about water flowing under mirza Anvar, from Samad. Now he was confused, and reddened: «I have not understood then, I heard incorrectly...» – He tried to turn all for fun. And Safar continued: «As they say, instead of the head of a ram, it's better to cut the heads of thousand sheep... Tell it to the imam».

Samad kept silent.

As soon as Safar found out that mullah Abdurahman was fired from the palace he decided to visit mirza Anvar, but could not gather in any way, work did not release him. At last he became more free, so he thought: «Today is Wednesday, and tomorrow is Thursday. Till Friday when I am not busy, and mirzo also does not work, it's only two days. The day after tomorrow I will go and visit him».

Safar-weaver finished work before the evening prayer. Despite the icy cold, he made ablution with ice water and, having twirled somehow his turban on his head, rushed off to the mosque. Leaving the covered corridor conducting to the yard of the mosque, he has seen, how Shahodat, Kalonshoh and mullah Abdurahman left from the chamber. Safar knew very well, that muftis worked together at the palace. Really they wished to return there mullah Abdurahman? He respectfully stood at the threshold; having pressed his hands on his breast, allowed to them to pass forward and then followed them. Passing by Safar, mullah Abdurahman darted at him with such a glance, that Safar thought: «I guess these muftis also would be fired from work like mullah Abdurahman, here they have gathered to gossip about Anvar!»

The Sufi finished to read a prayer, Mullah Abdurahman stood up before the prayer. All have respectfully bowed to him. But when the mullah said prayer, Safar instead of standing, reverentially having inclined his head, looked at

both muftis and thought: «How ugly he is, with a beard like a shovel, and by the face of another man it is seen, that he absolutely became puzzled... The mullah is disturbed, as a bird that lost its baby... Truly, all of them sharpened the teeth at Mirzo Anvar!. But maybe, on the contrary, they have come to console Mullah or to reconcile him with Mirza? But he is not here, it is better to be reconciled with the mullah, he is insulted».

Behind these thoughts Safar did not notice, how the prayer was finished; however, he beat off bows assiduously.

After praying the people started to leave, but several persons including Safar, keeping decency, stood not moving while all clerks did not leave the mosque. Only after the Sufi extinguished candles, they moved to the exit. Leaving for the yard, Safar has seen, that one chamber was lighted; from there was a boy of eleven with a motley cloth.

Safar passed to the covered corridor and stopped. Soon the boy from the chamber passed by. He moved forward and went after the boy. The boy went on the right of the street, the house of Safar was on left, but he continued to follow the boy.

– Hey, son of Shukur-sufi! – Safar called the boy.

The boy stopped. Safar approached to him.

– Well, we'll go! Your name is Mamatqul, yes?

– Yes!

– You know my Askarboy, Mamatqul? The boy looked at Safar.

– Askarboy is my friend, unless you do not know?

– Yes, yes! You seem to me a good boy... What have you done in the mosque?

– I was in the chamber at the imam, poured tea. Visitors came, important mullahs.

– Yes, yes! And where are you going now?

– To the imam's house, I will bring from palov to the visitors.

- So you are a real assistant! Well, you will bring plov, and then, probably, again you will begin to serve tea?

- Yes. I will serve, while visitors stay.

- Correctly! And when the important mullahs have come?

- Here is how father began to read the pray, they have come, and asked for tea, I served. Safar passed ten steps silently.

- You are a good fellow, Mamatqul... And about what these respectable uncles spoke?

- Still they have not yet spoken.

- Mamatqul, you know that the one, who listens and learns their conversation, will go to paradise? Can you learn what they speak about?

- Yes... Father also said, that this is charitable business.

- Good fellow, Mamatqul! By all means listen! If you listen, then you will come and tell me, about what they have spoken, I will give you ten quarter pences.

Mamatqul, being amazed, looked at the weaver.

- However, uncle Safar?

- Certainly, the truth, Mamatqul, - Safar said, calling coins in the pocket of the dressing gown. - Do you hear, how coins ring. If you listen to the conversation of the visitors and then will retell it to me you will receive ten coins.

- In the evening I am scared to go to you.

- Of what are you afraid, Mamatqul? Your friend Askar is not afraid to go out at nights.

- I am scared of dogs.

- The little fool! In our street there are no dogs. And besides you can wait till morning if you are afraid so much... If the imam sends you from the room, you carry out his order, but imperceptibly approach to the window and listen there!

Mamatqul smiled at any thoughts and affirmatively nodded his head.

– If you take courage, right after their leaving come to me, I will weave in my workshop. There you will receive ten of them, Mamatqul. You will do it, yes? You lose nothing.

– All right, – the boy said, turning to the narrow small street.

Safar stood a little, looking after the boy, then turned back. He decided to go for other day to Anvar and to bring the latest news. Most likely, as muftis – enemies of the main clerk also should be expelled from the palace. Occupied with these thoughts, he came at last to his home. Tuhta-bi-bi reproached him as her noodle soup having been left to stand too long, turned into a porridge.

41

«AREN'T YOUR COPPER COINS ERASED?»

Usually for early morning and evening prayers Safar went to read to the mosque. The others, mid-day, before sunset and night for the lack of time, he read at house. But today he has not gone to the evening prayer to the mosque for special reasons: Mamatqul, hurrying up to receive ten coins and having seen him there, could let out the overheard conversation to the strangers.

After supper Safar has gone to the workshop. He lighted beside the machine tool an oil lamp, connected the torn off threads of a basis, disassembled and combed the confused threads, sprayed them from a mouth starch. Again, combed the beginnings of them to brush away, which have already dried out. At last the basis was filled in the machine tool: from the old cap Safar took out bobbins with the threads reeled up on them, raised the machine tool, removed back the reed, filled shuttle.

The oil lamp hardly shined on the machine tool. Safar, with his round shoulders and hollow breast as if merged

with the machine tool into a single whole. Each pressing machine tool footboards were accompanied by a sound "chich-chach". Under this tune the shuttle scurried about here and there; ducks pulled behind itself a basis, and through certain time intervals the machine tool made on four vershoks of coarse calico.

Safar once a day filled thread, it defined his night working hours; and the oil lamp as though served for hours: the oil poured in the evening, just sufficed for this term.

Safar reeled up a ready fabric on the round platen and looked, whether the basis is perfectly in order; then he put swallowed chewing tabacco and listened, whether there was someone along the street. He still hoped, that Mamatqul would come running. Nothing was heard, he put a new bobbin into a shuttle and again started to work, Tuhta-bibi sat inside and reeled up threads on bobbins. Having reeled up a heap of bobbins, she filled them a wide sleeve of a dress, brought them to the workshop, silently laid out bobbins and collected empty bobbins.

- My feet got cold, - Safar said, - I want to be warmed...

- To make fire?

- Here thanks! It will be good!

- Tuhta-bibi left, and Safar quickly as if having become angry about something, moved his feet, pressing footboards. The shuttle and scurried about there and back, there and back...

After ten minutes of hard work he stopped. Suddenly the shuttle stopped at once, Safar listened to the yard, the external door squeaked and easy steps were heard. Holding a shuttle in hands, Safar grinned. Two-three more steps - and the door into the workshop was opened.

- Good fellow, Mamatqul, good fellow, well done, close the door, well!

Mamatqul closed the door, brought to his mouth his cold hands and started to warm them by breath.

- Have you got cold, Mamatqul? Now we will make a fire... And I store your ten coins, I thought, here Mamatqul would come, and I would give them to him...

This minute the door was slightly opened and again closed.

- Come, Tuhta, come in, here is Mamatqul.

Toxta entered with an armful of fire wood in hand and looked at the boy.

- Is it you, Mamatqul! - She exclaimed. - Why have you come so late? Is your mother healthy? Do all of your family feel good?

Mamatqul nodded to her and looked at Safar.

- I have a deal with him, - Safar said. You make fire somewhat quicker, you see we've got cold.

Tuhta-bibi threw fire wood into deepening where the fireplace was and kindled them, lighted up from the oil lamp.

- Good fellow, Mamatqul! - Safar-weaver said. - So you, sonny, spent them and came to me? Well done! Did somebody still come to them?

- No...

- Here is how... Mullah has not said to you to leave!

- I boiled tea twice. And if not me, who would make it? I served tea and listened, about what they were speaking.

- Good fellow, well done, - Repeated Safar. He looked at Tuhta-bibi, speaking: «The Dzhigit should be such, and our Askarboy also after all the Dzhigit». Well, Mamatqul, we will sit down by fire, we will be warmed and we will have a talk.

They sat down on hunkers beside the fireplace. Safar removed his shoes so to better warm his feet.

- Aunt, Askarboy sleeps already? - Asked Mamatkul.

- He is sleeping, - Answered Tuhta-bibi and, carrying away empty bobbins, asked the husband: - I will reel up these bobbins, will it be enough for the night?

- Reel up, there we will look.

Tuhta-bibi left the workshop. Safar looked, smiling, at the boy. Mamatkul answered him with a smile, but for some reason sighed, having looked at the pocket in which Safar held money.

– Well, clear your head Mamatkul, speak!

Mamatkul thoughtfully and irresolutely raised his eyes.

– All words were not from the book... Mullah read the Koran, but I...

Safar thought, that confused the boy, and, laughing, said:

– You did not understand? It is a pity! Well, say at least what you have understood.

Mamatkul sighed simply and involuntarily again looked at the pocket of Safar.

– If I do not tell about the book words, will you give money all the same?

Safar, laughing, got money from the pocket and opened his palm.

– Certainly, sonny. Here you see, five from ten are yours!

– The uncle imam... – started to tell Mamatkul, and his eyes have stuck into coins, – the uncle imam himself was the main clerk in the palace. And then one person, not mullah, butd any illiterate man, engaged his place... He said about the uncle of the imam, that that he writes badly, and the uncle of the imam was banished... There was still a person by the name of Ali. They spoke badly about the uncle of the imam...

Safar interrupted Mamatkul:

– To whom did they speak badly, about the Mullah?

– No, about the illiterate man... After that they also banished the imam. And now they wished to drive out the others. This illiterate very bad person, they spoke... That's why the mullahs have come to the imam to consult with the uncle on what to do.

Mamatkul spoke, all time glancing at money in the hand of Safar.

– Whether the coins erased, Safar aka? – At last the boy asked.

Safar laughed and, having separated five coins, gave to Mamatkul.

– Yes here, look for yourself. Mamatkul took money and attentively inspected them from all sides.

– As though they are not erased... Safar-aka, can I buy ten paysa of halvahs for a coin?

– Of course! Well, while put money into a pocket. You will receive the rest, when you will finish to tell. Well, it means the mullahs have come to consult...

– Yes! And if I fasten money into my zone scarf, they will not be lost!

– Wait to fasten... You will receive the rest five coins and then will hide them all together.

Mamatkul threw the money laying on a palm, they rang out, and he, shrinking, said:

– My feet absolutely got frozen.

– Do not squat.

Mamatkul sat as follows, having drawn feet under himself, but continued to complain:

– As if needle pricks me...

– Stop saying more. Now all will pass.

– The truth? – Mamatkul stroked the feet. – Have you also such, Safar-aka? And so, the mullah undertook a beard and began to threaten: «He will get in a snare», – He spoke. – The uncle imam sat thoughtful, and then... Oh, feet are pricking, Safar-aka!.

– Now it will pass. More, more...

– More? And, I have remembered! The uncle imam still said, that this spring he should marry.

The weaver interrupted Mamatkul:

– Whom to?

– Well that one, illiterate... Whom all of them abused... And you ask and ask... The Uncle imam said, that, on hearings,

the bride was very beautiful. Here, he spoke, it is necessary to try, so that the khan would know about her. And other mullahs also said: «You thought up very well! That's good!» – Mamatqul became silent, remembering something, and added: – They have still said, that Gulchin would arrange it.

Safar repeated these words:

– Gulchin, you say, will arrange all? Mamatqul hesitated:

– I have not absolutely caught. Gulchin, and maybe, Gulchin?

– Well, still what?

– That's all.

– Only that's all?

– Yes, all. After all when I left for the yard to pour tea, I did not hear, about what they spoke.

– Well, all right. And then they have left?

– They left. The uncle imam ordered me to go home... You would give me my money, I will fasten them all together.

Safar, laughing, gave the rest five coins.

– Tell nobody, that I have given you money, all right? And do not tell about the conversation to the imam. This conversation is pleasant... Are you not afraid to go home alone?

Mamatqul thought for a moment, fastened coins into his belt and, holding strongly this small knot, started running, having answered nothing to Safar.

42

A CUNNING MAN

When Safar weaver entered, a woman came out of the indoors. Maybe he had not seen such kind of beautiful and well dressed woman for the first time; he fixed his eyes on her til she was not seen. He entered the living room in wonder. There was no Anvar in the living room. Sultonali mirza was sitting in Anvar's place. Safar weaver

greeted him. Sultonali mirza replied to him and showed him his seat. Sitting in silence for a few minutes Safar weaver asked mirza. Sultonali mirza said that Anvar had gone to one of the neighbours with urgent work and would come in a few minutes and asked him what he wanted from mirza.

– I have no problem, – said Safar. I came to see mirza. Sultonali thought of Safar weaver that he was going to get something. Because he knew well that Anvar was generous and many people got used to his generosity. But Safar weaver was glad of his politeness; he felt friendship to him. Sitting in silence for a few minutes Safar began to speak:

– Mirza is a very polite person he treats everybody well. It seemed to Sultonali those words were spoken against his will. He was surprised at his friendship with mirza.

– Yes, as you said Mirza treats all in the same way, – said Sultonali.

– What is your job? – Burlap weaving sir. But mirza does not humiliate us. In that case you also listen to me. It is good to come to the point. Safar weaver's words made Sultonali laugh.

– You are right. What is your name? We are common people; our name does not mean anything. If I were a famous merchant you would recognize me. Sultonali Mirza laughed again, enjoyed his words, he felt closeness to him and thought for a while.

– If you said your name I would recognize you. If you are a weaver didn't you tell anything to Anvar last week?

– Perhaps I said because I come to visit him when I am free.

– Aren't you from the relatives of the clerk Abdurahmon?

– Uh-huh. It is so, sir.

– If I am not mistaken your name is Safarboy. Safar weaver laughed with enjoyment.

– Mirza told you. Sultonali also laughed and made a joke laughing:

– You said that nobody would recognize you by your name, but mirza of Horda, the chief of the town recognizes you.

– Oh, my God, – said Safar.

– I didn't know my value. They laughed talking for a while and soon they became old friends. Sultonali exclaimed to him "Safar brother" and asked about the clerk Abdurahmon's situation. Safar said that clergy Abdurahmon was fired and he was very glad of it, he made Sultonali laugh saying that he was very upset by it.

– I laugh that he couldn't go far, Mirza did it right.

– Yes, – Sultonali laughed.

– What did he say to people, perhaps you overheard? Safar patted his right ear and looked at his nails.

– I didn't hear about it. But he is a bad man.

– Why is he bad? – He is bad, – he said and looked at his nails again, – he tries to prevent people from succeeding in life. If he was an enemy before, now he has become aggrieved. Safar's plain heart revealed the hidden secret gradually. From his words "now he has become aggrieved", Sultonali got serious: – I live with Mirza Anvar, Safar brother, – he said. – There is no any secret between Mirza and me. For example, I recognized you supposing, I knew the words which you said about the clerk Abdurahman. – I know it, sir.

– If you know it, – said Sultonali getting upset, – Why do you doubt me? – No, no brother. For God's sake.

– In that case, why don't you answer well my question about clergy Abdurahman? – I told you that he is a bad man.

– I also know that he is a bad man. But you considered me a bad man too... Well when mirza Anvar comes you'll tell the secret which you kept back, then you'll be ashamed. Safar weaver burst into laughter and pointed at Sultonali: – Though I am ashamed I'll tell you the point you are very cunning man. That plain estimation made Sultonali laugh: – You are more cunning than me.

– I wanted to say those words to mirza.

– You'll say of course, but it won't be bad if you let me know. Well what is "the grieved" going to do?

– "The grieved"? – smiled Safar and thought for a while. If you live in Horda are there muftis there?

– Yes, there are: If you give them money they'll call black-white. What else do you want to say?

– Your words are funny. Two of those muftis had been a guest at our teachers' hujra.

Safar weaver talked about the event which happened last season. The listener listened to his plain words enjoying. His words flew to the mind Mirza wanted to marry the girl. The girl was very beautiful; they wanted the khan to marry that girl. A person can do it out of offence. Hearing those words Sultonali Mirza changed at once he opened his eyes widely long wrinkles appeared on his forehead.

– It is nonsense. – Well, go on talking

– His words are so, – said Safar and looked without a word for a moment. Yes, there is one more thing they then said treatment for Gulchin: I couldn't understand those words. Either he was mistaken or there was any Tajik clergy, I am an ignorant person.

Either Sultonali was thinking of those words or he was busy with another thing however for a minute he had been lost in thought. Because of that situation Safar began to scratch his forehead. While scratching he tried to learn something from Sultonali mirza's face.

– When did they talk about it? – asked Sultonali Mirza

– The day before yesterday.

– One day, Thursday passed after it?

– Yes, of course.

Sultonali shook his head then he said that Mirza Anvar was going to marry in the spring, the girl lived in this house. The clergies tried to lower Anvar's credit:

– Thank you, Safar brother, – said Sultonali. You warned us against the tragedy which would happen with Anvar,

as his friend I am grateful to you and at the same time I want to ask you a thing, do not tell Anvar Mirza about it, this secret will be between us. Because we may bring him trouble by telling other his news. Before saying it to mirza we must fight against those villainous people, get rid of that problem, then we can tell him about it. Before Anvar mirza comes back I'll go somewhere because of this news.

I'll tell you where I am going: the boy heard the word Gulchin wrongly, they said Gulshan. It means that Gulshan is the name of the woman who finds the Khan beautiful girls.

They want to carry out their plan by that woman and wanted to revenge mirzo Anvar by that way.

I must go to that woman as soon as possible. I think you've understood, me, Safar brother.

- I've understood, sir.

- We've agreed. Don't tell anything to mirza Anvar unless the work is done, brother, - said Sultonali and stood up.

- I must go before Mirza Anvar comes otherwise he won't let me go. If he asks about me telling him that I have been called by someone, agreed?

- May I also go with you?

- No, you sit here tell him about next Friday you'll come and know the result, three of us with Mirza talk, ok?

- All right.

Sultonali said good bye and left the living room in a hurry.

43

A LAME BIRD

Mahdum who was putting on his turban in the terrace heard a woman's footsteps, tuned to Rano, who was sewing out on the pavement.

- A woman is on the pavement, look my daughter, - he said.

Rano went to the woman, who was seen in the pavement.

– Hello!

The woman also greeted and went past the pavement and gestured Rano to come up to her.

That well-dressed woman attracted Rano's attention. She greeted her.

– Is it Nasibbek's house?

– No, – Rano said smiling. – We are Nasibbek's neighbour.

The woman looked at Rano from head to foot.

– Oh, my God, – she said, – I am mistaken. I've made you much bother. In that case let's get acquainted, whose house is it?

– Solikh Mahdum's house.

– I am ashamed of coming to Mahdum brother-in-law's house. Who are you?

– I am his daughter.

– Well, what is your name?

– Rano. Come in.

Thank you, Ranokhon. Which gate is Nasibbek's house?

– The first gate on the left.

– Thank you Ranokhon.

Instead of saying good bye the woman looked at Rano for a while. Rano felt uneasy and looked down. Then the woman said good bye and went back, going out she met Sa-far weaver.

When Rano went in, seeing off the woman Mahdum was walking down the terrace wearing his "necessary" robe. Having asked about that woman he ordered Rano some housework. Nigoroyim went to her relation that morning and Rano was alone at home.

– Your mother will come back late, so prepare the meal early.

By the way make the meal enough for you and Anvar.

I'll come full from the wedding; your mother will be full too. – He said, walking a little, – he said again:

– Ask Anvar about the meal.

Rano nodded, came to the terrace, Mahdum went out.

Rano sat sewing for a while, and then she took a book from the shelf. She was bored reading it. Then she stood up and went out. When she came to the gate of the garden Anvar was saying good bye to someone. Rano waited at the door. In a few minutes Anvar seemed to be left alone and coming towards her, so she hid herself behind the door.

– Hello.

Anvar, who had only walked one or two steps got frightened, looked around as a scared man.

– I am so frightened, why did you do so?

– I wanted to frighten you.

– Well, what are you doing?

– I went out to ask you about the meal.

– Ask your father.

Rano said that her father had gone and said his words. Anvar smiled.

– What kind of happiness is it that we are alone in the house. In that case I'll lock the gate.

– Yes, lock it.

– Why are you angry, don't you think that the living room will be left alone if I enter the room?

Rano said:

– I didn't go out to invite you; I wanted to ask you about the meal.

– I understand your aim, but I want you not to be bored.

– I won't be bored...What meal shall I prepare?

– What shall I order? – Anvar asked himself.

– You can't make noodles, pilaf, somsa, meatballs, manti as well. You can't prepare any meal, you are asking about the meal again.

– If I can't do it, make it yourself.

– I also can't make pilaf so I don't speak in a loud voice. But if we make together perhaps it will be good. You, go and make fire. I'll cut carrots and onions, done?

Rano didn't answer went on getting upset. Anvar went out smiling.

Rano was making the fire and washing the pot, Anvar was preparing carrots. Rano didn't answer Anvar's questions as she was upset, if she wanted to laugh, she laughed without showing him.

– Men shouldh't interfere in women's work. Of course you are not a woman. Shall I cut the carrot small or big? Once upon a time there was a girl, she cried because of the smoke of the fire. When she was asked about the reason the wood was wet, but the girl was very angry. Don't laugh turning back, bring me a duster I cut my hand.

Rano looked at Anvar's hand and knowing it was lie, went on with her work.

– If I cut my hand you won't believe. You'll burn your hair.

Rano threw her hair back, went up the pedestal near the pot; put oil into the pot, and brought meat and onion to Anvar.

Cutting the meat Anvar began to tease again:

– When is the big day? Oh, answer. If you don't want to answer I'll ask in poems:

Being upset

Days of spring

Nights of riot

Is it enough Rano?

Rano smiled, looked at Anvar stealthily, then fixed her eyes on one point.

– If you couldn't answer the question how can you answer the poem? I am also a very interesting person, – said Anvar. Rano stood for a while without answering then smiled at Anvar:

*Days and nights
Faces got flushed
Shameless words
Finished Mirzo?
She said and in a few minutes again:
From that place
Leaving me in peace
Looking at my face
Will you go Mirzo?*

*She said and after it:
Scratching the forehead
Leaving me behind
I answered in a hurry
Is it enough Mirzo?*

Anvar was in haste because of those attacks one at time, he smiled not knowing which of them he had to answer.

You are very keen! – He said. As Rano was looking at the fire, looked at Anvar smiling:

– Answer.

*Anvar thought smiling
Is it coquetry or shame?
I don't know exactly
Beautiful and charming*

Anvar couldn't say the last line, because it was difficult to find suitable words. There were very few suitable words and they had already been used by Rano. No matter how he tried he couldn't complete his poem and with Rano.

– Your bird has a head and two wings, but it has no leg.

– Head and wing are enough for a bird Rano... It only flies!

– A lame bird gets tired flying in the sky and it can't stop on a tree, but if it falls to the ground the cat will eat it, – said Rano and laughed long. Out of the laughter there were tears in her eyes, with the laughter and heat of the fire her face flushed and there were sweat on her nose.

Anvar was not upset of his loss; he was ready to lose a hundred times for Rano's beauty at that time.

44

HAVEN'T YOU LOST A SACK?

Sultonali Mirza came to "Kushbegi" and entered the gate. Walking along the dark path, he knocked at the door. After hearing a voice from the room he walked back a few steps. In a few minutes a fellow about forty, who closed his shirt with his robe came out. Greeting with Sultonali he began to put on his sleeves in a hurry.

– Please, sir.

That man was Kholboy, Gulshan's husband, who lived at the expense of his wife. He was at home the whole day without doing anything. Only cooked meals and swept the yard.

In other family women did the housework and men supported the family, but in this family it was the opposite.

When Sultonali Mirza heard that Gulshan had gone to Horda he felt upset, thought for a while.

– Do you know exactly that she had gone to Horda?

– First she wanted to go somewhere, – said Kholboy, – If it was all right. she would go straight to Horda, if it wasn't she would come back, so I thought she had gone to Horda.

– Do you know where she was going?

– I don't know, sir.

Sultonali sat on the pavement feeling exhausted and scratched his forehead:

– Did anybody call your wife yesterday?

Kholboy thought for a while, pinched his beard.

– Someone called, but I was not at home.

Sultonali got pale, shook his head, and looked at the street.

– If she comes, tell me I'll come back again. Tell her to wait for me, there is important work, OK?

Sultonali Mirza got Kholboy's promise, went out the street, went to the place where he came from. He was walking along the streets, he looked carefully at every woman who was seen in the street. When he got to the small market, the Friday prayer was heard. A lot of people who wore turban were going to the mosques, but he was running somewhere, forgetting Friday. He went past Solikh Mahdum's street, passed straight the street, walked ten steps and stopped.

Thinking for a while he returned, entered Solikh Mahdum's street. The gate was half open, there was nobody outside, the living room was also locked. Sultonali Mirza stopped at the door peeped through the garden. Having known that there were no women, he entered the garden and walked slowly stopping at the door of the inside yard.

– Mirza Anvar, hey, Mirza Anvar!

When he had called three or four times, footsteps were heard from the path. Sultonali Mirza called again. Someone answered that he was not there.

– Where is he?

– He has gone to Friday prayer.

Sultonali felt relieved, and looked at the threshold of the door:

– Sister perhaps I'll ask you. Has a woman come here?

– No. Yes, a woman has come losing her way, – she answered.

Sultonali's eyes widened, wrinkles appeared on his forehead.

– Was she lost?

– Yes, she was.

– How much time had passed since she came?

– She came in the morning. Sultonali shook his head. Thanked Rano, went out the street. When he went out the street, he walked quickly away.

It was 1.5 km to Horda, it took him 15 minutes to get there. In spite of the cold weather, he reached the first gate of

Horda with sweat on his forehead. He stopped at the guards, talked to them, and wiped his sweat, as he sat at the gate.

– Did you lose a sack, sir, – Said one of the guards smilingly.

– Like that. Did he go to the Friday prayers?

– No, he didn't.

Sultonali mirza sat without a word as if he was having a rest.

– Did any woman enter the haram?

– Not one, – said the smiling guard. About 5–10 entered...

Sultonali tried to laugh at his joke but he sat tiredly. Because now he couldn't do anything else. Fixing his eyes on the ground he recalled that all his attempts flew to the wind. He gave a deep sigh thinking that Abdurahmon and his companions would carry out their dirty plan. He particularly didn't want them to lower Anvar's reputation. Besides, he felt upset thinking of his selfishness about Abdurahman. He thought that the main factor of that dirty plan was Sultonali himself. "If I didn't make Anvar drive away Abdurahman from Horda those things wouldn't have happened", – he thought, though Anvar wouldn't say anything to him, he wouldn't be able to look at him in the face. Then he stood up, opened the small door of the gate, went in the doors. Leaving the straight road, he walked along the flower garden which was covered by snow. Men with weapons were walking round inside Horda Sultonali Mirza reached the left turn of Horda, one of the guards greeted him, and said a few words. He looked at the east side of Horda. He talked to the beks at the gate. They asked him what he was doing there on Friday. He answered: "I heard that sir was going to relax today". Sitting with for a while, he stood up again, passed the north side of Horda. Among three or four black slaves Urmonbek was playing with an arrow around the altar. After greeting the "little Khan" he sat at the side of altar and prayed. But his eyes were upon playing (reading a

religious text). Then he sat at the corner of the terrace and watched the games of the children. Urmonbek shot arrows they fell at different distances, the slaves picked them up and brought to Urmonbek. One of the shot arrows fell at the feet of Sultonali. Sultonali picked up the arrow, and fixed the feather of the arrow.

At that time one of the slaves came up. As he reached out his hand for the arrow Sultonali picked it up and held it higher.

– Give me the arrow, brother, sir will be upset!

Sultonali held the arrow higher as joking:

– Do you know sister Gulshan?

– What if I do?! Give me the arrow!

– Don't hurry; did Gulshan come to the harem today?

– What if she came?

– After you have finished playing call me sister Gulshan,

OK?

– Al right.

Sultonali gave the arrow to the slave, and looked at the guards...

– Will you call her, my son?

– I gave you consent.

– Do you know me?

– You? You are Mirzo.

Sultonali gave back the arrow.

The slave went to Urmonbek running.

Sultonali looked at the guards they were indifferent to him. Because his action was considered dangerous, if some one knew about it, it would cause great tragedy. Urmonbek played for a few minutes got bored, he threw the meadow to the ground and walked towards the gate of the haram. The slaves followed him. When the children entered the harem, he read a religious text to the graves again and went back slowly.

BLESSING IS PERMISSION OF GOD"

Mahdum stopped the children from reading raised to his feet and went out the school in a hurry to meet two famous beks. After greeting them bending down, he opened the door of the living room.

– You are welcome sir, you are welcome.

Mahdum was in a hurry not in vain. Because both of them were respectful beks before the khan. When they entered the living room and sat, Mahdum stood up and said to them "You are welcome". The quests also showed him respect.

– What brought you here, sir? Thank you very much for visiting us.

The beks thanked Mahdum. After Abdurauf tunqotar had looked at his companion he said the reason of their "visit".

– The Khan sent us to your place, he wanted to show kindness to you. Mahdum couldn't understand the khan's "favour".

Muhammad Sharif commented to the words of Tunqotar.

– The Khan doesn't consider everybody deserving his kindness. The Khan wants to marry your daughter and wants us to give this information to you. – Mahdum moved a little, he couldn't say a word.

– The Khan heard that you have a daughter, – said Tunqotar. – He thought that you had brought up a wise man as Mirza Anvar, so your daughter also must have been clever and beautiful. He hoped that you wouldn't refuse him. Of course it is not necessary regarding the greatness of the favour.

– Thank you, may the khan's richness increase, – said Mahdum after a long silence. We had a hundred daughters

we would give him for wife. But we have some shortages, sins and excuses, sir.

– Every bean has its blackness, – said Tunqotar.

– All of us have sins and mistakes.

Mahdum kept silent for a while nodding, then he fixed his eyes on Tunqotar's knee.

– I have a complaint first of all we are poor; we don't deserve the Khan's favour. My daughter isn't so well bred to be the wife to the khan. So do we deserve his kindness, sir?

Tunqotar said about the greatness of that favour.

After keeping silence Mahdum nodded to Tunqotar's words.

– Undoubtedly I obey the khan, but there is one problem "the thing is that we engaged our daughter to Anvar ...

By those words Tunqotar looked at Muhammad sharif, he laughed waving his hands.

– It doesn't matter, – he said. – Mirza Anvar is one the Khan's people, if he hears this news he will be glad.

– God willing.

– We will tell the Khan about your consent, undoubtedly he will be glad, – said Muhammad Sharif and didn't give way to other words. He even pointed to the next events. Of course the Khan will select the day of the wedding. Tunqotar, let's bless, blessing is permission of God!

Tunqotar opened his hands for the blessing, Mahdum followed them alarmingly. After the blessing they stood up. Because that event Mahdum couldn't say anything, he even forgot an important word which he was going to say. As he saw them off as far as the gate he tried to remember the word. When they were saying good bye he remembered the word.

He wanted to tell the news to Anvar himself. They received that request with pleasure; they said that they would explain it to Mirza.

Seeing off the respectful quests Mahdum came back to the living room. He was at his wits end. He didn't know

whether that offer was useful or not for him. Either he regretted Anvar or was ashamed of him, he felt sad. On the one hand he thought it would be better if he had made their wedding earlier, on the other hand he considered the Khan as the father of the people. On one side Anvar, on the other side the Khan. So he couldn't come to any conclusion and left the living room.

Seeing Mahdum at the door of the school, the children began to read. But Mahdum didn't like that noise. It seemed to him that he needed peace to think about what happened. When Mahdum sat in his place he ordered the children to stop. Then he let them go. The children left the classroom at once. Mahdum sat thinking in his place.

Though he felt sad thinking of Anvar, on the other hand good hopes appeared. It was a great respect to be father-in-law to the Khan. The Khan would pay a lot for his daughter.

If he has a grandson, he will be Khudoyor's heir. Because of destiny they didn't make the wedding earlier. Rano's destiny is to be Khan's wife, so Anvar postponed the wedding. Anyway he couldn't get rid of that sad feeling.

Suffering for a few minutes from that thought he got angry with Anvar:

- Who told him to postpone the wedding party to spring?

He is slow in everything. Who dares to refuse the Khan's words! - He thought. After that he calmed down a little, thinking for a while about some gold, the reputation before people, at last the heir of Khudoyor floated before his eyes. Seeing himself next to the Khan he smiled.

So Mahdum pulled himself together, he was glad of those match-makers visit, he decided not to think about Anvar's matter. Having decided Mahdum didn't think of others opinion particularly the opinion of his family. Telling that news he made Nigoroyim cry. And Rano dropped her unconscious on the book she was reading.

– Shall we show such kind of favour to Anvar! Poor Rano, will she be the 101st wife of the Khan? – said crying Nigoroyim.

We won't write about Rano's state at that time. But Mahdum considered both stupid and included himself the list of "wise people".

46

A FELLOW

It is known that yesterday Sultonali Mirza – (a title given to educated people who work in divan) told the slave boy to call Gulshan and went out of Horda. He waited for Gulshan till the evening without moving anywhere. After the third prayers three or four women went out of Horda, Gulshan was also among them. Greeting with women (because those women were familiar with him) Sultonali mirza asked Gulshan to talk in private and told her that their plan was spoiled and their enemies had another trick planned. So, Abdurahmon clergy pretended to be sent by Solikh Mahdum to Gulshan. Solikh Mahdum even gave Abdurahmon clergy some gold coins, asked him to give it to Gulshan in order she praised his daughter to the Khan.

– I have given up that work for two or three months, – said Gulshan. I wanted to please him. Later I went to see his daughter: after seeing her I came up to the Khan and complained. Sultonali brother, I didn't know that she was engaged to Anvar. Now that I can't tell the Khan about it. If Anvar mirza wants to marry I know some girls to recommend him.

Getting disappointed at Abdurahmon and his companion, Sultonali said good bye to Gulshan. He didn't regret that his day was wasted, but he couldn't endure evil people's success. He couldn't imagine Anvar's reaction to it; he was

afraid that Anvar would refuse to be Mirza, showing his anger to the Khan. According to Gulshan's words, the Khan would certainly be Solikh Mahdum's son-in-law, it was difficult to find any solution. It was rather difficult whether to inform it to Anvar or not. Sultonali Mirza pondered over the problem for a long time. After a long consideration he decided to tell Anvar. Because there was very little hope to prevent the tragedy.

Perhaps if he told Anvar about it he would find a way out or the matter wasn't so important to Anvar as Sultonali thought, anyway it would be easier if he informed it to Anvar.

In the morning Sultonali got up, prayed to God, without having breakfast with his children he went to Solikh Mahdum's house.

Anvar who was about to leave, greeted Sultonali sadly:

- Why didn't you wait wait for me yesterday?

- Someone called me. I left Safar in my place.

Anvar tried to smile, and asked him if he had breakfast or not. Sultonali pretended himself he had stayed at one of his relatives and have breakfast there, on the way home he wanted to see Anvar. They walked together, when they walked twenty steps, Anvar looked at Sultonali's eyes smiling:

- Who did you ask in our house yesterday?

Sultonali scratched his forehead:

- Were you at home, when I asked?

- I was at home, - Anvar smiling and walked in silence for a while.

- Though I wasn't at home my family recognized you.

Having heard this news I have been astonished since yesterday. Well, who is that woman you asked? What is the matter?

- It is not so important.

- Tell me.

Sultonali felt relieved that it was time to tell that matter, and walked a little without saying a word.

– It is funny. Though it belongs to you a little, but it is not so important.

– Tell me. I was anxious after your visit.

– It is impossible to tell you a thing. You make a mountain out of a molehill, – smiled Sultonali.

– Am I? I'll be indifferent to everything, tell me.

Sultonali began his story with Safar weaver. But not so seriously he talked about Abdurakhmon and the other's actions. They tried to revenge by that way. Though Anvar's anxiety grew more and more, in most cases he over came such sufferings by smiling, it gave a relief to Sultonali.

When he spoke about the meeting with Gulshan and her reply to that matter, Anvar got anxious. But unexpectedly he tried to be indifferent.

– It doesn't matter, – said Anvar. – Though I didn't imagine such kind of baseness of them, however I expected contradictions. It doesn't matter, Sultonali. – Sultonali didn't pay attention to the change Anvar's voice, so he went on speaking not so seriously.

– They can't go too far. They want the khan to marry the girl you love, so they attempt to revenge. They want to say that Mirza Anvar will stay without a wife. But all the girls of the country are ready to marry Anvar. If you want, you can be son-inlaw to respectful people.

It is ridiculous that they are going to defeat the tiger throwing a little stone at it.

– It doesn't matter.

– Thank you, Anvar. In some cases, I got angry with you. But now I understand that having a great heart is also dignified. Don't think about anything else, Anvar. If the religious leader in his companoion doesn't want to tease you, it is not a problem to find a girl for you and for your friends.

– Of course.

Anvar tried to be calm now there was no sign of those changes in him Sultonali tried to make Anvar forget those words but Anvar gave him short answers or nodded smiling. They both entered the divan. Mirzos who came earlier were busy writing. Anvar greeted them, even as if nothing had happened he greeted Shahodat muftis (religious leaders). As soon as Sultonali saw them his astonishment grew more and more, he looked at Anvar and he thought of the word "fellow". Undoubtedly that fellow's heart was full of not only love, but great dignity.

Sultonali Mirza also entered the room, where Anvar was, he was working next to Shahodat muftis. Anvar collected all the letters and applications and gave to the executor, those which belonged to the divan he distributed among the mirzas.

Everyone was busy with his job, there was silence. Only the rustle of pencils and paper broke that silence. It lasted for an hour, then some words were spoken. Shahodat Mufti put paper and pencil aside, warmed himself sitting at the sandal.

– Clergy Navruz is a base person, – said mufti – I have been astonished at his action since yesterday.

– Base, base, – said Kalonshosh.

Sultonali looked at Anvar. But Anvar was looking at the writings.

– To ignore the request of many people is baseness. If she died why are you interested in her property? It isn't humane treatment.

– Can a base person understand humane treatment?

Sultonali looked at the muftis once or twice smiling.

– So many people gathered in your house, you die if you treated them to a dish of pilav, you are so greedy!

– I also didn't know clergy Navruz well, – said Kalonshosh, – Hadn't got any dignity. Sultonali got pale, his eyelids began to stir.

- Your argument is funny, - said Sultonali suddenly,
- Can we find humane treatment nowadays? If we think
thoroughly, you and I also don't have generosity.

- At present time you shouldn't expect humane treatment not from others, but from yourself too, - Sultonali's words astonished the muftis who were having a good conversation.

Looking at Sultonali, Anvar couldn't see his eyes. Because having spoken those words he was working at the edition.

- You are an interesting person Sultonali, - said the Mufti. We are talking about another idea, but you are talking about other things.

- You are arguing about humane treatment. I also gave my opinion.

- Your words are suprising. Where did you see that we are too far from humane treatment?

Anvar tried to look at Sultonali's eyes, but Sultonali turned his face to the muftis.

- Of course I didn't see or hear that you haven't got humane treatment, - said Sultonali with sarcasm. But now as I examine myself I have done some crime this week. That's why I said those words, otherwise I have nothing to do with the others.

The Muftis' faces changed, and looked at Anvar as a sign of alliance and shook their head as if they got angry with Sultonali.

- Sultonali, - said Anvar in a disappointed tone. They are right, why did you say those words? For the sake of God do your own business. Then Anvar turned to the Muftis smiling, and pointed to them not to pay attention to Sultonali's words.

Saying a few words Shahodat mufti was busy with his job. Sultonali also held his pencil as if he obeyed Anvar. Everybody was busy with his job, it was silent everywhere.

By the evening the Mirzas went away. Sultonali and the Muftis also went one by one. Anvar was the last to leave and he met Tunqotar in the verandah of divan. Tunqotar dragged him inside holding his hands as if he was joking. They went in.

– What can I do for you?

– The thing is that, – Tunqotar laughed. – We did something without telling you.

– Well, can I know?

– We have been sent to Solikh Mahdum today. We knew that her daughter was engaged to you. We thought you would forgive us for the sake of the Khan. Though Anvar felt pain in his heart, he tried not to reveal his secret.

– Is that all?

– That's all Mirza Anvar.

– It isn't so important. You needn't have asked me about it.

– Thank you Mirza, I'll tell the Khan about your devotion.

– No, no, – said Anvar shaking his head, – Don't tell him.

– Why don't you want? The Khan must know about his devoted people. Anvar gave a ghost of a smile.

“Don't tell him, I don't want”, – he said.

They went out the divan together. The sky was overcast. A strong Kokand wind was blowing.

Below the dark clouds, crows were flying, without stirring their wings and sometimes there were drops of rain. At that time Anvar who stopped at the bridge didn't know where to spend the night.

47

OPEN LETTER

Solikh Mahdum who returned after the fourth prayers saw the door of the living room open. Being aware of his arrival he went in. In a few minutes Nigoroyim came

out with a dish of pilaf. It was possible to know by her wet eyelashes that she had given way to tears, she was bending her head. When Nigoroyim entered, Anvar was lighting the candle. Nigoroyim laid the table, put the dish before Anvar and burst into tears. Anvar was not surprised he knew the reason for it.

– Why do you cry? Is it possible to change destiny?

It isn't good to be upset you didn't want it be so. – Nigoroyim didn't answer, and went out the living room crying. Anvar ate a little, wiped his hand, pulled the quiet to himself and made a deep sigh. On the candle holder the candle shook like a heart, and gave a dim light to the living room, like shaking the candle Anvar's thoughtful face also seemed to shake.

There was silence in the living room, only the rattling of the rain, the noise of the wind and the meow of the cat on the roof broke the silence.

The wind which came in through the hole of the door almost blew out the candle. The living room darkened, by the footsteps from inside Anvar reached out the dish on the pedestal and listened with a dish in his hand.

He understood that footsteps were far from the living room, Mahdum went to the mosque for the fifth prayers and put the dish on the shelf behind him.

In a few minutes he heard the footsteps again. They were approaching the living room. In the verandah of the living room he saw Rano with a teapot in her hands.

Her eyes got red, and her eyelids were swollen. Looking down she put a white teapot near Anvar, took a cup from the shelf, washed it, wiped it and bursting into tears put her face on the pedestal.

– Rano, Rano, – said Anvar in a hurry. – Are you a child, nothing has happened yet.

Rano was crying bending down her head. Anvar tried to soothe her and to stop her crying.

- You are crying in vain, Rano. What is the use of crying or are you going to make me cry?

- If you think well it isn't you who must cry, it is me but I won't cry. Why? Because crying is the last way out. I don't like people who cry. Stand up my dear, stand up.

Anvar patted Rano's hair, raised her head with his hands and kissed her.

- If you want to offend me, give way to tears. You washed your face with tears, let me wipe your face. Hold yourself together, be clever and quiet, and listen to me. Rano turned her face, wiped her face with her shawl, and gave a deep sigh.

- Is it possible to achieve anything by crying? Never. If you are going to cry again, I won't speak Rano.

Rano turned back again and dried her eyes. Anvar poured tea into the cup, and gave it to Rano:

- Drink, Rano.

Rano shook her head. Anvar made her take the tea.

- If you don't want to drink all, sip a little.

Rano sipped a little as Anvar said, put the cup down before her. Anvar raised to his feet, went out the verandah, came in with water in his hands:

- Wash your face, Rano.

Anvar poured water, Rano washed her face. Anvar brought a towel from the peg. Rano wiped her face.

- Well. Let's talk as grown-ups, why do you need crying.

Rano felt relieved, smiled looking at the fellow who was staring seriously at her.

- Smile once more, Rano.

Rano got serious.

- It isn't time for a smile.

- If it isn't time for a smile, it isn't time for crying as well, - said Anvar sitting.

- Your heart looks like a small sack which is decorated with valuable stones, you filled your heart with them. The fate brought rude thing into those valuable stones. Natu-

rally with your small heart you couldn't bear that rudeness and cried. I also suffered from that, but didn't cry. Why? Because that rudeness can't be prevented from loving you, what about you, Rano? Well let's talk about the reason of our tragedy. This event happened by the Khan's words. The Khan looks like a big animal who tries to do whatever he likes. There are a lot of small insects around him, they are also villain. They can't do anything themselves, so they want to carry out their plan with the help of the Khan. If you remember the clergy Abdurahmon also wanted to marry you, according to the poet:

He couldn't reach the flower neither went away nor losing his hope didn't go on his way.

– As you know I took him for the service in Horda by the oppression of your father, but he worked against me with some villainous people. I drove him away from Horda, as a result you see what has happened. But, can they separate us? No. Figurative separation is not separation, because we are not connected with each other figuratively, base people can't break real connections. Why should we get upset, Rano? The treatment for love is separation, closeness makes love weaker, but separation makes it stronger, which of them will you choose, Rano?

Fixing her eyes on her knee Rano was playing with the thread of the carpet. Anvar repeated his question again.

– I'll choose the latter.

– But I won't be with the Khan.

For a few minutes Anvar kept silent. Rano's answer made him upset.

– I also didn't want it. But those people didn't leave me any way out, Rano. We have time to think again, if you find any way out I'll obey you. I won't give you to that villain. Don't cry, behave as a clever girl, I...

Anvar couldn't finish his words; Mahdum appeared at the door of the living room.

- Go to your room Rano, what are you doing here so late?

Anvar felt trembling in his body: he pointed Rano to go, but Rano didn't move. Without saying anything Mahdum went back.

Anvar got upset. Indeed, Mahdum acted as a stupid person. Not thinking to offend Anvar with that "order" he forbade Rano's usual "habit": every night Rano sat in time, but that night it was late as he thought.

Besides he didn't meet with Anvar, it also meant something. The signs of sadness in Rano's face turned into anger and hatred.

- Uncompromising!

- It doesn't matter; don't get angry, - said Anvar.

- Now we have nothing to say.

Rano sat for a while, then with tears in her eyes went out of the living room.

In the morning when Nigoroyim brought tea, Anvar was not in the living room, there was a letter on the sandal:

"My kind aunty! I have been brought up by you since childhood. I brought you much trouble. I had to go away for some reasons without paying my debt before you. Then all the things which belong to me as well as gold are also present from me to your family. I gathered that gold for Rano's wedding party, I request you to spend that gold on her wedding. If people call me, tell them I'll be in Horda. I hope you'll forgive me".

48

ON THE EVE OF THE WEDDING PARTY

The match makers of the Khan came for the second time and appointed the day of the wedding: the following Friday there would be a wedding party at Mahdum's

house, then Rano would be sent to Horda. A day later, wedding dowries was also brought. The Khan's present included three hundred golden coins, luxury dowries which cost a high amount of money; Mahdum was given the post of the leader of schools.

Losing his head among those luxuries Mahdum couldn't think about Anvar who had gone away three days ago, he only called him "Uncompromising" and felt relieved. Nigoroyim held herself together, sometimes she was sorry for Anvar, but the preparations for wedding party didn't let her think of Anvar. It's known that Rano would have a lot of trouble those days. Besides, Anvar had been absent for three days. Did Anvar leave Rano forever or did he get offended by Mahdum's attitude to him? It was not time to take offence, and disappointment; at least he was able to help her spiritually at that time.

Poor Rano thought that Anvar was not devoted to her, though he had always been good and clever. For several days Rano suffered a lot, even her beautiful eyes stopped shedding tears.

Sitting in the sandal, Rano thought about the terrible Friday. There were two days till Friday. Only two days. She couldn't imagine anything else, she left herself at the end of the rope. Then she thought about Anvar. She was angry with Anvar. He left her in such a difficult condition instead of being supported. She thought what she would say when he came again: "all your words are a lie! You were afraid of losing your rank, you have lived in our house for 10 years, and didn't you know my father's character? I considered you in a higher rank than the Khan. Why have you come when everything had been done?" If Anvar asked about her last words she could say nothing, because she hadn't found any way out yet even she didn't think of it. Before that tragedy she only wanted to rely on Anvar, but Anvar disappeared and made a new wound in Rano's heart.

Nigoroyim was busy with preparations of the wedding, Masud who was bored sleeping in the cradle, was screaming.

Being lost in thought Rano gave a deep sigh and stood up nervously, and came up to the cradle.

She couldn't calm the child, left him, and went down the yard and told her mother who was busy in the porch to feed the child, Rano went to the pavement.

Mahmud and Mansur were playing with the neighbours' children in the garden. Snow covered everything, the pedestal was wet because of rain, and some places on it were cracked.

Rano stopped at the pedestal, called Mahmud and asked:

- Mahmud where is your father?
- Father is at the market.
- Is there anyone outside?
- Nobody.

Without saying anything Rano came to the middle door. As Mahmud said there was nobody outside, because of the wedding party the apprentices of the school were free. Rano who went outside for the unknown reason saw the door of the living room locked. Then she went to the study. She entered the study. She looked up at all the shelves in the study as if she was looking for something. From the upper shelf she took an inkpot. Seeing the ink dried in dark-yellow, threw it on the ground and went out of the study.

- Mahmud!

Mahmud looked at his sister.

- What?

- Come here.

Reluctantly Mahmud came up to her.

- What?

Rano pointed Mahmud to follow her. They went to the study again Mahmud entered the study with Rano.

They talked for some time in the study.

Rano who was writing a letter at home heard her mother greet and talk to someone and she had to stop writing. When she saw a pregnant woman near the porch. Because that woman saw Rano, she had to greet the woman: Rano greeted her. Nigoroyim invited that unknown guest to the sandal.

– This way.

The woman went up the way and sat, looking and blessing Rano.

– Are you surprised at seeing me here? – asked the woman and took out a paper from her pocket. Mirza has been in our house for two days. You must know. I am Mirza Sultonali's wife. He was bored without books, he said that he had books at home and gave this paper in the morning.

Hearing those words Nigoroyim felt regret and shyness. Rano who was standing at the porch came up to the woman and took the paper before Nigoroyim.

– We are ashamed before Mirza. I have been worried for three days because of his absence, – said Nigoroyim. It is destiny. We thought we would have relations with Mirza.

– It is fate, – said the woman. Mirza is also one of the cleverest people. He is grateful to you, after those events he couldn't come here. While they were talking Rano entered the house:

“To my aunt and Rano. A lot of greeting and blessings.

Don't be angry with me, because I have no other way out. Send me Shaykhi Sadiy's "collection of books" from this woman, I would take advantage of my free time. Rano, you wouldn't need my poems, it's also careless if you take them with you. If you don't get upset give it too. Write about your health.

Anvar”

The letter was so short but it was valuable for Rano.

She tore off the paper which she began earlier. While the women were talking, she began to write a reply.

A SYMBOL

Sultonali who returned a little earlier than Anvar stopped at the cow-shed to talk to his wife.

- Did you go, Ruzvon?

- Yes, I did. I went. I brought, - said Ruzvon and went on milking the cow.

- Did you make fire in the living room?

Ruzvon nodded. Sultonali Mirza entered the house, took off his turban and robe, returned to his wife.

- Let the calf free. Sultonali Mirza let free the calf which was tied to the column. The calf began to suck his mother. Carrying the milk Ruzvon went into hujra. Sultonali also entered after her.

- Well, what kind of news Ruzvon?

Ruzvon was pouring the milk into the dishes.

- I went and gave the letter. They made tea, and after a long conversation I came back with a book.

- Who was there?

- Mother and daughter.

- How is her daughter?

Ruzvon shook her head regretfully.

- When you told that to Anvar he was so upset. I thought about it. She is so beautiful.

- Yes, yes!

- They seem in love with each other. The Khan shouldn't have interfered in it. Poor girl, she is upset. Her heart is also dark.

- Yes, yes. What about her mother?

- She also doesn't know what to do.

Sultonali shook his head regretfully.

- Where did you put the book?

- In the living room. By the way there is a small letter in it. Saying some words about pilaf in the evening, Sultonali went out. The living room was open.

With his elbows on the low table Anvar was turning over the book. As Sultonali entered, Anvar put the book aside and tried to smile.

- Thank you, she had brought me.

- There is a letter in the book, perhaps you have already seen it?

Anvar hadn't seen the letter. He opened the book and took a folded paper. Sultonali must have noticed that Anvar hurried a little with the matter of a letter, so he went out the living room saying that he had some work to do.

Anvar opened the letter.

"Hello, dear Anvar. We are all well. From your letter we knew about your health, so we are very glad. Be always healthy. Don't worry about us. I gave the book which you asked. Mother sends greetings to you. You'll read the eternal word from Shaykhi Sadiy, so I wrote the letter shortly, Rano."

With a letter in his hands Anvar stared at it. Thinking for few minutes he read the letter again, analysed every sentence. With the words "We are glad to know about your health", she was going to say "you disappeared". In each of her words there was sarcasm. Especially the last words "you'll read the eternal word from Shaykhi Sadiy" disappointed Anvar. He understood those words so "There won't be Rano next to you, spend your time reading Shaykhi Sadiy". Anvar put the letter into the book and by the hard influence of the letter he sighed, and kept silence. Those days he experienced hard time, Rano's words were more sorrowful. Is there any way out? Can they overcome the tragedy? Only the last way out is to reveal everything to Khan and to ask him begging. Anvar was not sure that Khan would help them. Perhaps Anvar would be blamed for his impoliteness and would be punished.

Anvar suffered spiritually and physically without getting ashamed when Sultonali entered the living room. He was unconsciously bent down over the sandal. Sultonali thought that it was because of that letter.

Not to put him in a difficult position he pretended to look for something on the shelves. Anvar raised his body, gave a deep breath and pointed Sultonali to sit. Sultonali sat down.

– Why are you sad, Anvar?

Anvar tried to smile.

– That letter offended me, – he said and kept silent for a moment. I am not going to conceal my secret from you Rano and I have been in close relationship for a long time. After those events I decided to stop the relationship and came up to you. In her letter she wrote that she is angry with me, all her words were sarcastic. What can I say? She is young and not clever. If you want, read it.

Sultonali smiled, but he was flushed with the uncanny situation. He took the letter from Mirza and read. Having read he looked twice at some words.

– I wonder what she meant with her last words?

– It is also sarcasm, – said Anvar. She is saying not to think of her any more and to spend free time reading Shaykhi Sadiy.

Sultonali acted strangely.

– Perhaps.

Anvar doubted his action.

– Well, in your opinion?

– I also support your opinion, though I understood it differently.

– For example?

– I thought that there was one more letter in the book and you would read the last words from it.

– Perhaps you are right, – Anvar looked around. Shall I look through the book again?

Sultonali smiled.

- OK... I'll bring the meal if it is ready.

Sultonali left the room. Anvar began to look for a letter. Not having found anything he turned over every page. After having checked 30 pages Sultonali's words came true: there was a letter not folded in the book. Anvar hurried to read: "Out of compromise and carefulness I wrote another letter and hid in the book. Anvar, a true friend must be supported in hard times; it is up to you to judge who wants to run away. It is easy to promise, but it is difficult to keep it: keep it in your mind. Who thought a gentleman as you would be upset because of the nonsense? I am not going to blame you to help a poor girl; but if unhappy. Rano is in trouble, every tragedy expects her, such kind of devotion of a beloved person was written in legends? Don't be upset thinking that you have a lot of sin, Anvar. If you want to get rid of your sins there is a service for you, it is a very easy service for you: tomorrow on Wednesday evening come to us secretly if you want, say farewell to me for the last time. Because tragedy is waiting for me, Rano wherever she goes."

Anvar read the letter hastily, put it into the book quickly. Sultonali with a dish of manti in his hands passed the terrace.

- Is there a letter? - said Sultonali putting down the dish.

- You are right, I am mistaken.

Anvar nodded, closed the book and went out to wash his hands.

50

PRISON FOR LOVER

Rano's second letter was one more trouble for Anvar. He couldn't find any solution. Meeting with her, on the contrary he would suffer more. Anvar regretted that

he wrote a letter to Rano asking for a book, he should have thought of it thoroughly before doing it. At the same time, he didn't expect peace in his next action.

Because he couldn't see any reason in meeting with Rano. Undoubtedly when they met Rano would shed tears, he would be upset, but on the other hand because of love he wanted to meet her.

The whole night he thought about the good sides and bad sides of the meeting. He dreamed about the meeting. No matter how he tried to act wisely, it was not good not to meet, to go away keeping silent. Though meeting with her seemed not a clever decision, her last words didn't leave him in peace.

When Anvar came to a firm decision about going, he was working in the divan. He wasn't thinking about whether to go or not, but he was thinking whether to go openly or secretly. If he went openly Mahdum would doubt, he would watch them and would offend Anvar.

If he went secretly... if there is no betrayal, no bad intention, why should he hide himself?

Well, if he went secretly, Mahdum would see him...

It was very difficult for him to solve that problem.

They both came back in the evening: Sultonali Mirzo treated Anvar with pilav.

After the fourth prayer Anvar asked Sultonali for permission to visit his nephews.

It was the last days of winter. It was very cold in the street. The new moon was glittering above the city. The children of makhalla were singing a song "Barot came did you know, did you wash your dishes?" when Anvar got to Mahdum's house it was dark at the same time darkness in his heart grew, his heart began to beat fast he looked around as a thief. A week ago he felt the opposite: it was pitch dark everywhere, only the moon was shiny above the makhalla

gave light in his heart, but... But it was also being dragged towards Horda.

Anvar came up to the closed gate and pushed it slowly. Seeing it locked, he felt upset. After standing there for few minutes he went to the gate opposite it. He walked twenty steps, pushed the neighbour's gate which was open. He entered the dark pavement. He was going to take advantage of Mahdum's leaving for the fifth prayer, if the gate was not open then, he would leave. He didn't have to wait long, with the call of the fifth prayer, in few minutes Ranos' gate would be opened.

The footsteps were heard out the gate, were approaching Anvar. His heart was beating fast; he looked at the road through the open gate of the neighbor. When that person walked straight footsteps were heard from the place where Anvar was standing.

Anvar hurried, when Mahdum walked five-six steps he had to got out of that place. Anvar walked quietly. Having looked around for a few minutes he walked to the study.

As he opened the door of the study he looked back at the gate. It was dark inside the study. In the pitch darkness Anvar didn't know where to walk then he walked one-two steps to the mat and sat with his arms crossed upon her knees. The light which was seen through the small door weakened the darkness. However, his eyes could hardly see anything. It was silent everywhere, only a child's crying which was coming from a distance broke that silence. So some minutes had passed. At that time he heard a knock under the ground gradually it turned into footsteps then he was all ears. Someone went out on the pavement or to the living room.

Anvar sighed deeply, the door if the living room was opened then it was closed again, someone walked in the yard. Anvar got impatient by the footsteps approaching the study. As the door opened he stood up unwillingly.

- Anvar.
- It's me.

It was Rano who opened the door. She stopped walking in a little. Looking for a few minutes at Anvar breathed deeply and went back. As Anvar couldn't understand the situation, he didn't find any courage to stop her. In a minute Rano appeared at the door again, put a black thing before Anvar.

- I've brought you a narrow quilt, - she said whispering,
- My aunts came to our house, I'll come back when they fall asleep.

Saying those words Rano went back, and closed the door. She went away. Having understood the situation Anvar laid on his side in the narrow quilt quietly. Though he knew that Rano would come, he didn't know when she would come. So he had no way out except to wait for her. In a few minutes the gate was opened and closed.

Anvar was all ears and had to raise his body. The footsteps approached, and moved away and then disappeared.

The time passed with difficulty he looked around because there was a noise. Though he waited long but she hadn't come yet.

Being bored Anvar sat and lay on his side, he tried to warm his cold legs. A lot of time passed so. Anvar couldn't sit, he put on his shoes, got up and began to walk around the room to warm his legs. Walking around a little he sat again. The moon began to sink, since the room was getting dark, the noise of storm was heard, cocks screamed for the second time. After having lain on his side for a few minutes, he stood up, wearing his shoes he opened the door, and walked down the yard and rubbed his eyes. There were a lot of stars in the sky. The rays of the moon were hardly seen from the roof. Anvar breathed deeply.

- Aren't you bored?

A BRAVE GIRL

These words were pronounced right under his ear, frightened him. Rano stood next to him, holding something in her hands.

– I couldn't come soon. I have been waiting them to sleep. Let's enter the room, Anvar-aka.

He followed Rano, his heart was beating. They sat near to each other on the mattress.

– I was afraid that you could not guess to look for my letter in the book, – said Rano quietly. – And if you hadn't found...

– Having realized everything, why have you written so bitterly, Rano?

– If I had not written bitter words, you wouldn't have come; – said the girl in a trembled voice. – Do you love your post so much? Anvar was surprised by her sudden, inappropriate question.

– I do not understand what you mean by this?

– I'm asking: do you love your post of the head of clerks.

– I'm thinking of refusing this post, Rano!

– And what are you going to do then?

– I will leave Kokand and travel.

– And what about me, will you take me with you?

He looked at Rano very surprisingly for a long time.

– You! Will it be possible, Rano?

– Yes, it will, – she said in a brave and loud voice. – If you refuse your post right now, then everything will be possible...

Anvar was in a state of confusion.

– What are you talking about, Rano?

Rano could not answer at once.

– If your words are true, I will go with you... Of course, if I am not a burden for you.

- Anvar was silent. He gasped not knowing how to answer such a proposal, which he hadn't dreamed of.

- If I am not a burden for you, - repeated Rano.

"A brave girl", - thought Anvar. True it was that this was the first fearless rebellion of women against Hudoer's brutal desires. No matter what may happen from now on, he had to take this bold proposal of his beloved girl. His love not only made him to do this, but also the honor of jigit (gentleman). He touched the bale, lying in front of him.

- What is in it, Rano?

- Here... are your old clothes.

- What are they for?

- If you want...

He thought that it was paranja, and now he was confused.

- Well, I will do whatever you want... But why do you need my old clothes? - he asked quietly.

Instead of answering, she began to untie the knot of the bale.

- Why have you taken the paranja?

- Wait a minute...- she said, busy with something in the darkness.

"Maybe there is the paranja there", - he thought and stopped asking questions.

Rano meanwhile took some long cloth from the floor, which looked like paranja. At the same time something fell down with a bang, Anvar looked for it.

- Take it, - she said.

- What is it?

- The thing which you gave my mother to keep.

Anvar guessed that it was gold. He felt warmth in his heart. Dear

Rano, she cared about their future.

- Have you found?

- Yes, I have.

– Then, let us go.

Anvar and Rano went out to the yard, and he saw, that he was followed not by a woman in paranja, but by a young man dressed in gown and telpak (headwear).

– What does it mean, Rano?

Rano quietly went to the gate. Anvar went out and thought that having dressed in men's cloth, Rano improved the matter: walking in the street with a young girl was not safe, it may cause a suspicion of guardes and watchmen. As if going with a friend, looking careless Anvar reaching the turn and waited for his companion who was ten steps behind. The red and setting moon was still lighting the corner of the street, where Anvar stood, waiting for Rano. At last, Rano approached him and looked at him as if asking the way where to go. With her braid tidied up, and long clothing, she seemed more beautiful. What a jigiti!

Anvar raised the hem of her cloth and tidied her hair, while coming out of the telpak. Then he beckoned to go to the right.

They went. Rano two steps ahead and Anvar following her. Light boots with leather galoshes fit her little feet; she was going fast and easy as if flying. Anvar tried to keep up with her as if he was in a hurry for his hope, dream. They walked for a long time. Suddenly they saw a bonfire, there were some people sitting around the bonfire. Rano stopped.

– Don't stop, – said Anvar. – Pass them quietly. Do not pay attention. And if I stop to talk with them, wait for me a little far from here.

– It seems this inopportune time mirshabs (police) do not let us pass.

– They will let us, 'cause I'm with you. Don't be afraid, just go straight!

Rano went ahead shyly. Ten steps far from the bonfire one of the people shouted:

– Stop!

Rano looked at Anvar anxiously. He gestured her to keep going, and returned to that men near the bonfire. Mirshabs and watchmen recognized Anvar, stood up and bowed.

– Sit down, – said Anvar, warming up at the bonfire. – Dakhbashi (foreman) is also here.

With that funny nickname he addressed a fat, looking funny man, who was really an ordinary mirshab named Korinboy.

– What are you doing outside so early with a boy-dancer?! Here we see that you seemed to be a rake...

– We were at the feast, Dakhbashi.

– But you have already passed your home. Where are you going?

Anvar came up closer and stretched his hand to the bonfire:

– Don't you know that I've bought a house...in the Rais street.

– Oh, congratulations!

Anvar thanked them and told them goodbye. Out of respect the mirshabs stood up.

Being far from the bonfire, Rano stopped and asked Anvar:

– What was that wretch talking about?

Anvar smiled, patted on her shoulder and said:

– Let's go, go on, young man! The wretch is telling the truth.

– Where are we going? Are we arriving?

– Very soon, we are going to that woman who had come to your house.

Rano went first. After a long silence she turned and asked:

– Are they kind people?

– Very kind, – answered Anvar and kept silence for some time and then added: – Don't worry about the owner of the house, he is like my brother...Do you understand me?

- Yes, I do!

Soon they came into the narrow street and kept silent till the gates of Sultanali's house.

52

"THE MIRACLES" OF A FRIENDSHIP!

The Khan was about to come out of the Harem. The moments of the khan's exit from the harem were very soon. Some of his close people gathered to welcome and greet him. Suddenly worried Sultanali appeared at the door. Nodding to Abdurauuf-tunkotar, he went back. Getting alarmed Abdurauuf-tunkotar went out to corridor asking Sultanali what had happened. Sultanali biting his lips beckoned to Abdurauuf-tunkotar to come up in his boots without galoshes. He approached him.

- What has happened?

Sultanali sorrowfully shaking his head bit his lip.

- Our clerk put his foot in it.

- What?

Sultanali bended to his ear and said in a quite voice:

- Mirzo Anvar acted dishonestly in relation to His Majesty!

Abdurauuf-tunkotar bent forward to Sultanali and looked at him surprisingly.

- What has he done?

- Recently he has stayed at my house and has lived there for some days, - he began, looking around. - Evidently he did something unpleasant in the house of his teacher. Without paying attention to care of such a person, this scoundrel did not hesitate to spit in the face of the khan too. He escaped with the daughter of his teacher, who was going to marry the khan and brought her to my house. Even though he is my friend and guest in my house I am very much confused

by his shameless act. He forgot the bread and salt of His Majesty and the goodness he was sprinkled with! I was very surprised, and was filled with indignation at his indecency. I approved of his courage in front of him, but in my heart I cursed that villainous man and raced right here, in order to inform about it to His Majesty!

Abdurauf was shocked, he grabbed his beard and put it in his mouth and bit its edges a couple of times.

– Ah, damn it! Is he still in your house?

– Yes, yes he is! And the girl is also there. We cannot know what His Majesty will order us to do, but I think we should not waste time! He must be caught right now!

– Yes, of course! – Exclaimed Abdurauf-tunkotar, – I will inform him about it right away. Thank you!

Tunkotar hurried to the house of His Majesty. Having done his duty before the khan perfectly, Sultanali easy in his mind went to the bursary. So this was “the miracle of friendship”, which was conducted by a very close friend of Anvar!

Sometimes later tunkotar came up the window of the bursary and beckoned Sultanali to come out.

– Well, what’s the news? – asked Sultanali.

– An order was given to catch him!

– Yes, that is correct! To catch both of them?

– Certainly.

Sultanali with four servants went out. Having untied one of his horses, standing at the gate, Tunkotar followed him. He quickly left all pedestrians behind. They had to run after him in order not to fall behind him. They were running on the same line with the horse and in case they fell behind, tunkotar hurried them. Having reached the turn, Sultanali waved his hand and they went quietly. Then he called Abdurauf-tunkotar and said that they had to turn to the right.

They quickly reached the gate of Sultanali’s house. There he stopped speaking:

– Here, your majesty, is my home, I think it would be better if you enter alone.

– Why? – asked Tunkotar.

– I'm considered to be his friend...Wouldn't it be better if I stay out of this situation?

– Good!

– Thank you...When, entering the gate, you'll see the livingroom, he must be there. And the girl is in the room.

Sultanali went behind the gates of neighboring house. Tunkotar moved with the servants to the gates. Both doors were open. Man and woman's voices could be heard there. Tunkotar got off the horse, giving the lead to one of his servants.

– Stay here with the horse and do not allow anybody out! Neither men nor women, – he said. – And you, jigits, follow me. As soon as you see Anvar catch him and tie his hands immediately.

The servants expressed their full readiness. Tunkotar approached the room and at the entrance to the hallway listened: A man and a woman were talking.

– I'm disgraced, I'm disgraced!

"Disgraced? It's too easy to say that", – whispered Tunkotar.

– Oh, woe is me! – Proclaimed the voice.

"Of course, fool, woe is you!", – said Tunkotar.

He made a sign to his servants to follow him and entered the yard. In the middle of the yard Mahdum stood, holding a paper in his hand. Two men and three women in paranja were near him. All of them started listening to the approaching steps of servants led by tunkotar. Mahdum plopped his hands and moaned:

– I'm disgraced, I'm disgraced!

Tunkotar waddled and came close to him.

– What happened?

Mahdum stroke his forehead and cried:

– I have no words to express. It is my fault in front of His Majesty and ready to bear any punishment. In the morning we discovered that our daughter disappeared. While we were running and looking for her, we were informed that she is in Sultanali's house. And we immediately came here...

– And, then?

– This scoundrel Anvar took her from here. We looked in and out, we couldn't find anything but this letter:

"My dear brother Mirza Sultanali!

We went to inform you, we decided that staying at your house is not safe. Though you seemed to be our friend, your behavior seemed suspicious. Especially we were worried that your wife treated Rano as a girl of a poor behavior. We sent you to the castle in order to leave your house. Naturally it is very hard to find a true friend. Though I explained you everything: that I didn't want to betray our khan, but my true love toward Rano was higher than anything else. You argued that I forgot kindness of the khan toward me and reproached me ungratefully. You didn't think even of that I refused my post of the head of clerks. I am not frustrated with you. But I was upset seeing your cruel attitude toward my friendly trust. The poor girl was not even given a pillow to rest her head. "Thank" you and your wife for such "humane" treatment.

Always your friend, Anvar".

– How did he dare to discuss something about humane treatment...Damn you, how shameless! – Exclaimed Tunkotar, angrily and hid the letter in his pocket. – Call here from the room the wife of Sultanali!

One of the women went in. Ruzvan, evidently stood in the inner hallway, and the woman called her, coming near to the inner door. Tunkotar came up to her

– Are you here, sister?

– Yes, your majesty!

– What can you say about this situation?

Ruzvan stood for a while, was silent, and cleaned her throat. Then she began:

– For three days a young man was living in our home, whose name was Anvar. This evening he brought a young girl. I was surprised and asked my husband about her and found out that here we have such a situation...It was very unpleasant but we couldn't chase them away, and couldn't call someone to do this, it was too early. Having discussed with my husband, we decided to leave them till the morning and in the morning to inform people... They waited till the sunrise and Anvar said to my husband: "We are going to stay here one more day, and, please, hide us". My husband hurried to the castle and I also couldn't be calm and sent a neighboring boy to inform Rano's parents. Suddenly, the girl, sitting in front of me, went out of the room. I thought that she needed to do so and was quite calm. But she has not returned. So, I got worried about her and went out of the room too, but she wasn't there. I decided to look for her in the men's room. When I came the parents of that girl appeared...This is all that I can say, your majesty.

Tunkotar was extremely puzzled. He came up to the men, standing next to Makhdum.

– And what are you doing here?

– We...are Mirza Sultanali's neighbors...

– Well, well...Why have you come here?

Tunkotar's rude tone, confused them.

– I was outside, – said one of them, – And saw the teacher who was followed by three crying women... And I thought that something had happened in Mirza's house.

– You are just wasting your time and staring...And you?
– he addressed to the second man.

– I am his neighbor too, – he was more confident. – Finding this out I was a little surprised...

– Why were you surprised?

– Yes, if according to the words of my neighbor, Anvar must have left with a girl in paranja...But when I saw him leaving the home, there was not any woman with him.

– Was he alone?

– No, he was with a boy.

Abdurauf-tunkotar shuddered his shoulders in perplexity,

– That is quite true Karim-aka, said Ruzvan from her shelter.

– The girl came in such a dress in the evening too.

– Oh, damn it! – Exclaimed tunkotar.

Mahdum got so frustrated and cried.

– Oh, what happened, has already happened, – said Tunkotar.

– They, of course will be caught and will be punished! But the honor of His Majesty was struck by a great loss. That is why, everything that was discussed here should be kept in secret. You must keep silent!

– Yes, of course! – said all presented there people

Tunkotar came up to Mahdum.

– It is not your fault, but you brought up your daughter in a bad manner!

– Oh, my Lord, we are thy servants, – Mahdum murmured and wept. – What a shame she did, she must die! I dare not look at anyone's eyes!

One of the women sobbed and wept. She was Nigoroyim. Abdurauf-tunkotar, who failed his work, stomped to the gates accompanied by his servants. There he got on his horse with the help of his servant and let the lead. Coming up to the gates where Sultanali had hidden, he called him.

– Mirza Sultanali, come here! They have ran away! Sultanali went outside surprisingly.

– How? Really?

– Ran away! – repeated Tunkotar, giving him the letter.

– Read it and give me back, I have to show it to His Majesty.

The next day Sultanali was rewarded for his faithful and devoted service to the khan: he received the post of the head of all clerks.

53

THE TRIUMPH OF SCORPION

That evening there were people again in the chamber of the mosque. There was a candle on the shelf; in the sandal charcoal is crackling. Two gloomy Muftis are sitting at the sandal warming their hands over the fire. There are some thick books on one of the shelves. They are "Mulla Djami's comments", "Dogmas and canons", "The Stream of wisdom", "Islamic Right", "About Noble Manners". On the shelf of the west wall a paper in the form of a flower the words of prayer were written. On one of the brightly ornamented pegs hung on. Someone's turban was hung on, as a pot of a widow.

Mufti Shahodat blended the fire with the poker and took a deep breath.

- A disease which cannot be cured is terrible.

Kalonshakh nodded affirmatively.

- It's hard to admit when the khan cannot estimate who really deserves a reward. To work under the leadership of this scoundrel! It's better to abandon the khan's bursary!

- Have patience, dear! God loves patient people.

- Of course...But instead of bowing such stupid people, like Sultanali, it's better to be caned ten times!

After the night prayer, making ablution again, Mullah Abdurakhman entered the chamber. A high, finely embroidered white skull cap on a small elongated head and long black beard made him look like a Hindu merchant. He took off his turban and put it on the top of the skull cap.

– Since, your grace, has not wanted to eat, and I've told them not to cook

– No need, we've already eaten at home.

Having sat near the sandal, Mullah smiled and looked at Shahodat.

– So they have let Mirza Anvar go with the girl?

– Yes, we have, mullah Abdurakhman.

– I know, I've heard.

– Day by day everything is getting worse. For five days already we have been anxious. Yesterday you came to visit me... Unfortunately, I was out. I came after you had gone and I was very sorry. So, today I've decided to come together with Kalonshakh, hoping that it would be possible to talk...

– Thank you, dear Mufti, thank you, – said Mullah standing up reverently.

– I heard only yesterday what had happened between Anvar and Sultanali from the mullah Busa. So, I wanted to know more. That is why I came to you. What has happened?

– Story? Kalonshakh, come on! Tell us about that story.

Kalonshakh motioned to Shahodat to tell and he began to open slightly the pages of the story. – You are quite right: our hero took the girl and disappeared...

Mullah Abdurakhman smiled wisely and mufti Shahodat continued:

– As I know, Mirza Anvar, considering Sultanali as his true friend, brought the girl late at night to his home. And, Sultanali, who in his turn, promised not to tell and let them stay, early in the morning came to the castle and reported everything to Abdurauf-tunkotar, who, of course, told to the khan. The Khan ordered to catch the escapers, but when tunkotar with his servants went to the house of Sultanali, the lovers had already disappeared... And only an offensive letter for Sultanali was left. Evidently, Sultanali behaved suspicious and Anvar realized unpleasant ideas of his friend... And especially, at that time, when all of them were sleeping,

he left somewhere. Though Sultanali couldn't help catch Anvar and his beloved girl, by his actions and faithfulness he persuaded the khan to promote him as the head of all clerks. That is the whole story.

Having listened to the story, mullah Abdurakhman was silent for a while. Then he adjusted the fire in the sandal and smiled again, looking at muftis.

– Mirza Bois told the same story, – he said at last. – You may be you right, gentlemen, but I have some doubt in this...

– And what do you think?

Abdurakhman made a strange gesture with his hand; he slowly began speaking.

– I think, – he said, – That all these things are a game, which was created by Anvar and Sultanali. There is proof of considering things this way. You are, my friends, be aware how true Anvar's and Sultanali's friendship was, just like we are. Crows do not pick crow's eyes! What do you think about this, gentlemen?

Shahodat looked at Kalonshakh, but he did not pay much attention to Abdurakhman's words. There was dead silence.

– Sultanali could have used Anvar in getting his new post, – said Shahodat. However, your suggestion is also possible.

– Sultanali could create this game without destroying their friendship, – laughed Abdurakhman. – Because having persuaded his beloved girl escape with him, he couldn't stay in his post. And Sultanali, just like Anvar was not unsafe too. Such kind of evidence should be accounted too.

Shahodat stood up and came up to Abdurakhman and gave a friendly pat on his back. – Thank you, my son, God will bless you!

Abdurakhman smiled while looking down, and Shahodat, continuing to praise him, put nasvay into his mouth and took his place.

– Mullah Kalonshakh, we haven't even thought about it.

Kalonshakh didn't share the admiration of his friend and continued warming his hands under the fire. Sometimes later he said:

– I had some ideas about it, but didn't believe. I do not believe it even now.

– Why?

– Because, if he didn't betray Anvar, he wouldn't be threatened. No, he had betrayed him with such an effort only to demonstrate himself in front of khan.

Kalonshakh liked to argue, and however persuasive all other evidence was, he insisted on his own ideas. Being aware of his character well, Shahodat nodded his head reproachfully.

– But I think that we are wrong.

Kalonshakh continued to insist:

– Why are we wrong? Let, Mullah Abdurakhman think it over. All Sultanali's acts have been deliberate. He wouldn't be in danger if he helped Anvar... But he betrayed his friend in order to get a higher post. That's all!

Abdurakhman was deep in thought. Evidently, he was not affected by this argument: he smiled and raised his head.

– Their friendship is known to everybody in the street, mullah. Sultanali had to hide his implication in Anvar's actions. Otherwise what would he look like in front of the people? And you, gentlemen, what would you think? No, I think, these clever people killed two chases with one arrow. Sultanali showed his faithfulness to the khan and without any difficulties he got his new post.

– However, however...In my opinion, if he was not against Anvar, nobody could blame him!

– Why?

– Not "why", but "for what?" – Said Kalonshakh. – In order to blame one person according to all rules of shariat, there

should be all proofs for it... And here...bah-bah-bah-but you were friends with an accuser! And what else? Blaming him you cannot prove that you were an eye-witness during their arrangement. You just suggest that he was. According to the Shariat, such accused people were not punished, my dear!

Kalonshakh became very nervous. Abdurakhman became pale after such words of Kalonshakh.

– I, my dear, expressed my own suggestions, and this, as I think, do not need any proof. One thing is clearer: Sultanali cannot be trusted; he is not fully interested in being the head of clerks.

– And your word cannot be believed too.

– But it's my right!

Here Shahodat realized that the problem was going to start a big quarrel, and hurried to intervene.

– Why argue? Both of you are right. But it is not a great problem now; we should find how to get Sultanali out of his post.

Shahodat, as it was said above, was very much aware of Kalonshakh's character. His words made him calm a little.

– Now it's better, – he said. – Whether Abdurakhman is right or not, we could use his suggestion, when to find it necessary, but it would be wrong to accept it as the truth.

Shahodat hurried to change the discussion, because he knew that if one more ridiculous phrase was said by Abdurakhman, Kalonshakh could not be stopped from speaking.

– Let's close this theme! – He cut. – It seemed to me that everything will be fine, but whoever could suggest such a thing. The explanation of mullah Abdurakhman will help us more in getting rid of him as soon as possible.

The calm and clear tone of Shahodat influenced Kalonshakh, he calmed and peacefully asked:

– How can we get rid of him?

– It's very simple, – answered Shahodat, – We'll write Abdurakhman's suggestion on this problem and that is all!

Mullah Abdurakhman looked at Kalonshakh proudly and scratched his forehead.

But Kalonshakh was not satisfied. He shook his head, saying:

– The Khan is now sure of Sultanali's faithfulness. He will not believe our words.

– The Khan believes only himself, – said Shahodat. – If he trusts Sultanali, in any event we will write our opinion, he may agree with us and chase him away. And in case he doesn't believe us, there won't be any damage for us. What do you think, mullah Abdurakhman?

Abdurakhman nodded.

– But I think that if our letter works out, everything will be good, but if it fails, we will be chased away from the castle.

– Why? – asked Shahodat.

– It will be known who has written it.

– No, – objected Shahodat, – We will not sign it.

– Letters without a signature are not looked at.

– It doesn't matter. The most important is that the rumors should reach our khan's ears.

– Who will write it?

– Don't worry, Kalonshakh! It will be done perfectly! At last Kalonshakh agreed. They decided to write right there, in mullah Abdurakhman's bursary, and the mufti started to compose a denunciation.

54

DIFFERENT FAITHES

It was heavy rain. In the corner of a narrow street there was somebody's shadow. Covering himself from the rain, a man came up the door of a house and with all his might began knocking.

– Who's there?

- Open, it's me.
- Safar, is it you?
- Yes, yes!

There was a sound of rattling chain. Safar, who got drenched, entered to the narrow hallway and closed the door behind him.

- Is everything fine?

- Yes, it's fine, - answered an old woman, who opened the door. - Why are you so late, Safar?

- Don't you see, how it's raining?

Speaking with that old woman he entered into a small yard, where a small ayvan the size of four mats and only a quarter of height from the yard. In the shelf a smoke fumes were emitting. An old blind man was sitting at the one side of the sandal, cleaning cotton from its buds. Having heard some voices outside, he stopped doing his work and listened to that voices attentively.

On the other side of the sandal, a woman was sitting, covering her face with her handkerchief. And not far from her, there was equipment, used to clean the cotton from its seeds, and a pile of cleaned cotton wool lay under that equipment.

- This pretty girl is really confusing us, - Safar said to the old woman. - How much we objected her not to doing this, but she is sitting from morning till night backing to clean the cotton.

- She is evidently, bored, - noted Safar and addresseed the old men: - Good evening, dear uncle! How are you feeling?

A blind old man rose his head, trying to hear better:

- Good evening... Where have you been for so long, Safar? You may have gotten so wet. Go to our gueast scholar.

Trying not to look at the face of that woman with her face covered, Safar came up to the door of a small room, which led to ayvan.

- Uncle, are you telling her different stories in order not to bore the sister?

– I've found that she herself is a master of telling stories. First she tells then I tell her. Don't worry about us.

– I'm glad for you! Good job!

– Saying these words, Safar opened the door and entered the room. Anvar was sitting and reading a book at the light there. Having noticed Safar entering the room, he stood up.

– Oh, no sir, take you place, please! How are you doing! Aren't you bored? I have been for three days. You are, eventually, angry with me... There hasn't been any answer from there and in addition my wife has become ill...

– Never mind, never mind! You have been worried, Safar-aka!.. You are wet to the bones...

– Trifles...I'll just take off my robe and everything will be all right, dear Mirza, – said Safar, taking his wet clothes off.

– And you just sit...Everything is all right in town...Friends send their best regards to you. Your friend is working as the main clerk...And I, thank God, do not have any complaints. Praise you!

Anvar smiled, and the weaver Safar, sitting at the sandal took from his bootleg a letter and gave it to Anvar. Then Anvar put it on the sandal, and stood up. Then put off his robe and threw it over Safar, who was sitting only in one shirt.

– You'll get a flu, Safar-aka, wrap yourself in the robe.

– You always worry about me, dear Mirza...

The robe was made from bekasam, Safar looked through the padding and confusingly added:

– I have to wear a clean shirt; I don't want to make it dirty.

Anvar friendly waved his hand and opened the letter.

“Dear my brother, mirza Anvar!

Friends are happy and enemies are sad, a happy end approaches. The wheel of fate, turning awry, brings different problems and misfortune to intelligent people. But the thou-

sands of unhappy days are replaced by a short moment of happiness. People are prepared to have happy days too. Escaping from infidels, The Prophet Muhammad hid in the cave, and since then it has become the rule of behavior for each Muslim.

I am your sincere friend and obedient servant; I'm very keen in informing you that our plans have worked out and influenced our furious khan and his accomplices. Suggestions which I've told you before are coming true: all suspicions which are considered to direct me are over, and the dependence of the khan on me is growing. Some days all this thing was a secret, though in the neighborhood some people have guessed, but they have not any courage to say it openly. But there was given an order to find you. Please, be very careful while the shadowing does not stop. Your departure to Tashkent should be postponed for some weeks. I've kept this letter for a long time because I know how hard they are looking for you. And you know that our Safarbay is too self-confident and not so careful. I think, it would be better to keep in touch with his wife? A woman walking in the streets may cause less suspicion, than a man. But, please, take all measures of safety! Do not feel calm, be far from neighbors and be very attentive.

There is one interesting piece of news for you. Yesterday, coming back home I met some visitors, they were waiting for me in the yard. I thought that they were newcomers as they were dressed in traditional clothes of Fergana. I thought that they had come with the request of writing them some applications and invited them to the livingroom. There I asked how I could help them, and one of the jigits, having understood that I am the master of the house, told me your story. Being very surprised, I thought if they were scouts. "How have you found out this and who has told you all this? – I asked. – I am a brother of Mirza Anvar, – he said, – Our sister has told all this". I have never known that you have the brother, and was surprised. Then I told them all

that information with which your sister was informed (remember, I wrote you last time). It deceived them a bit and my story was, of course, far from reality.

Your brother regrets that he has never been to Kokand. He said that he serves for one military man in Bukhara. He left for Samarkand to visit his relatives but didn't find his brother there, so he came here and found out that his brother was in trouble, but couldn't find you. This story made my suspicions to slow down. I even tried to calm him. The jigit's (by the way his name is Kobilbay) companions are also newcomers; they have come here to see the city. Though the guy who introduced himself as your brother looks like you, but slightly bigger. He looks like a hero, anyway all of them looked the same. I asked them to stay for lunch but couldn't persuade them.

In your last letter you worry about me thinking that Abdurakhman and the muftis can damage me for my new post. Of course, I should admit that it is a very possible danger. But my faithfulness to the khan has already been proved: it's as clear as day that there is no any appropriate person for the position of the main clerk. But as I wrote you before, I have not had any desire to refuse that goodness of the khan. If I had refused, people wouldn't have believed in my sincere obedience to the khan, when I betrayed you. They had to think that the betrayal of close friend to take his post had proved my faith towards the khan. And of course if I hadn't acted like that, all suspicions were caste on me. But you shouldn't worry about my evident hardships. That will be my fate and it would be impossible to change something. Whatever may happen I never wish to lose the possibility of being obedient and faithful to my friend. Send my best regards to Rano. Her parents are out of danger, so they have just been deprived of the khan's gifts. I request you to be very careful. Certainly, be vigilant and ready for everything.

Your Sultanalı".

Anvar read the letter and immediately burned it in the fire.

– Well, Safar-aka, we should be more careful!

– Certainly, dear Mirza, certainly!

– Will you stay here or leave?

– I cannot stay here, brother. Sultanali will punish me.

Anvar laughed out loud.

– It means that I have to write back right now, – he said taking from the shelf ink and an ink pen. – Are you warm now, Safar-aka?

– Yes, yes...I am alright, dear!

* * *

...In the fifty fifth chapter we left Rano and Anvar at the gates of Sultanali's house. Then we moved to the fifty second chapter without informing about mysterious actions of Sultanali.

Well, having seen that Anvar came to his home with a woman Sultanali was a little lost. Then he really understood how much they loved each other. True friend in spite of any proceeding troubles, was ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his friend and congratulated them. Though their fate had not been decided yet, at anytime they could come across troubles. However, Anvar worried not only about himself, he was also afraid that Sultanali could be exposed. He was absolutely aware, as said by Abdurakhman, that he was going to leave his friend in unsafe conditions. Sultanali had some links with Mahdum's house, because with the help of his wife, Anvar received his book. And that fact could cause a very appropriate reason for Abdurakhman and muftis to expose Sultanali's actions... Anvar shared all his thoughts with Sultanali, but didn't get any satisfactory answer, since Sultanali had not worried about himself. He was very devoted to his friend. Sultanali considered that was the sacred rules of friendship.

But Anvat also had the same feelings, never wishing to cause danger for his friend. Having thought over all those problems he offered to act the same way, which is already known to our reader. Sultanali agreed. All this game was planned to start from the next morning. Sultanali deliberately prepared his wife beforehand for possible changes. At midnight a neighbor Karimbay for one gold coin agreed to give a testimony, which would help to mix people from finding out the truth.

As it is known all the roles were drawn perfectly, so there were not any misunderstood moments. Having heard what had happened, Safar immediately appeared to help. He found a place where they could hide them: it was the house of his sister and her husband in the suburb of the city. Warning his relatives and preparing all the necessary things he led Anvar and Rano there. Our reader is already aware of the facts took place later.

Well, Anvar, scrapping with his ink pen, was writing the answer to Suldaali's letter. Suddenly, for a moment he stopped writing and said:

– Maybe next time, you will come here with one more person, whom Sultanali will send with you. He is my brother. Alright?

– Alright, dear mirza, certainly. But write about it in your letter to Sultanali.

– Yes, I'm writing.

Anvar continued writing his letter and Safar wrapped in a blanket, with which the sandal was covered. The rain already stopped, only big drops were heard outside. A strong wind rose, passing though the cracks it rippled the smokes fumes. The old woman was cleaning the cotton with chigirik (special equipment for cleaning the cotton from its seeds), the sound of which reminded cat's meows.

A HOSTAGE

The sun was shining. Charsu was already crowded and noisy, and it prevented brave jigits from sleeping in one of the empty shops. It seemed that the noise and uproar acted on them as a lull. They laid on a very thick mats, putting under their head the same thick, dirty pillow, wrapped with robe. They snored the whole night.

At that time a man stopped next to the closed shop and shouted loudly:

– Hey, Navruzkul, Tukhta!

Two of the sleeping people didn't move, but the third one who laid far from the entrance got frightened and woke. He looked around, yawned and awakened his neighbor.

– Wake up, Sharif, it's afternoon!

Jigit opened his eyes

– Eh, leave me, Rahim!

– Wake up! Kobilbay is already here.

Sharif turned on his other side and looked at the third sleeping man.

– When did he come, damned?

– Who knows...I wonder whether he saw his brother. Wake him up!

Sharif without changing his position, tugged him by his moustache.

Kobilbay grumbled and woke up.

– Leave me, Sharif!

– Have you seen him?

– Yes I have... He sends you regards, – answered Kobilbay and turned his back. – Leave me, let me sleep a little.

Ah-ah! – Rahim exclaimed. – Stop sleeping! Tell me about your brother. To hell a dream if you sleep to midday. You do not hear, that noise on street?!

– I returned, do not stir, Rahim.

– I am hungry. Where we will have breakfast, Sharif?

– At the teahouse.

– Well, you too get on the shroud, stop to roll. Yes that he, apparently, has again fallen asleep, damned?!

Rahim and Sharif have started to dress. Straightening a long belt, Rahim scattered money.

– Ehe, – he said, collecting coins, – God wishes to take away from us this money. Kokand is cold to us, there is no work. Money escapes us, hunger, Sharif, wait for us.

– Do it cover, this Kokand is favourite to Kobilboy! – Sharif exclaimed. – Even the smiths do not take us as the pupil. If we do not find work, we will sit down, hey donkey-kobil.

From their chatter Kobilboy definitively woke up.

– Chirp, as a sparrow, Tadjiks! – He said.

– If there is no work, we will go to Tashkent.

– Well also think of something to say! – Exclaimed Rahim. – You are speaking useless words, where to get money so that we can reach Tashkent?

– Money will be found.

– Money will be found? – Rahim burst out laughing. You only look, Sharifboy, at this rich man without sort, without tribe.

– Money will be found, – repeated Kobilbay and put his hand into his shirt pocket. – Eh, at once it is seen, that you are of a low origin, the son of a smith and the son of the washerman of corpses...

– Oh, oh, – began to groan Rahim. – You offend me, your honour! You are of very high origin, the son of sweatheart!

Kobilbay, widely yawned, took out something from his pocket and threw it at the feet of his companions:

– Here is some money, take, if necessary. Such swarthies like you can't spend it for a year!

Rahim and Sharif have seen at their feet two golden coins. They looked at the coins, then at Kobilbay.

- Whom did you kill?
- In our sort there are no murderers!
- And, it means, his brother gave it! - Sharif said. - Tell us, at last, that you have met with the brother?

- Have you met him?
- Obviously, he is a good person.
- Yes, good!
- What, unless he will be hidden for all the time? - Rahim asked. - It is necessary to think of, how to get him out of troubles... Have you spoken with him about it?

- I've spoken with him... Time will come and we will leave for Tashkent.

- Fine! - Rahim picked up and winked to Sharif. - Not casually this wretch said, that we would go to Tashkent. Well, well, Kobil, that will do, we will go to Tashkent and look at the Russian.

Sharif picked up the golden coins and gave them to Kobil.

- Take away, hide back!

Kobil did not dare to take.

- The golden coins are yours. To everyone a coin!

- Do not become angry, we after all make a joke.

Kobil burst out laughing and put them into pocket.

At this time Tashkent was already in hands of the Russians.

- You did not take, wretch?

- Yes after all I said that your Brother has sent them... - He owes nothing to us.

- Eh you, innocent! The brother has told, that cannot accept you as visitors where he is now, so and gave instead money. Well, have understood now?

- Ah you, damned, our money is thrown at our faces!

Kobil laughed, and they became angry with Anvar to abuse Kobil.

- You absolutely of other breed, than he. If you were of one sort with him, you would know, what was his hos-

pitality. The world for Anvar and unfamiliar visitors showers with gold, and you, wretch, have locked us in the empty bench. If not your favour, we would lift all your lovely Kokand as a lump of clay into your mouth!

Kobil grumbled.

– Do not grumble, do not grumble, wretch! Not money are friends to us, but a human is the friend... And you? If to bring those horses to the market, nobody will glance even into mouth to check teeth... You will not buy all the same for a penny.

So they playfully squabbled with Kobilboy covering noise and hubbub, At charsu deafening shout was distributed. At the market all abated, have broken off, listening, and our Dzhigits.

E-E-hey!

Listen to me, people, servants of the shah!

Listen, remember all words to one!

The name of clerk Anvar is known to you with a long time ago.

At the court yard he was mirzo, now he is a fugitive and the thief!

Before the padishah, he disappears in beg,

There is great anger for Mirzo by our master-padishah.

For now mirzo servants of the shah have found Anvar,

For Anvar his friend – Sultanali answers.

Listen to me, people!

For sins of mirzo Anvar the friend will answer with his head.

Gather, people! Listen! Listen to my voice,

Perishes not guilty! Tomorrow at midday, he will die!

Malicious business will be made! I also shout for this purpose,

That Anvar would hear me, or his relatives,

That all my words have reached Dinar ears: Because of him his friend – Sultanali will be lost!

Who in fire throws the friend, himself will be lost in the turn. Innocents will help, who will inform Anvar – Cargo of sins will combine forever, God will bless him!

The herald stopped. The market noise started again. Kobilbay, listening to the herald at first indifferently, gradually began to listen with intense attention, and now plunged into deep thought.

– What is wrong with you, Kobil? Why you are silent? About what was it shouted?

Kobil silently has shaken his head.

– Speak! – Sharif said. – He, apparently, said, that mirzo Anvar is guilty of something? Kobil continued to be silent.

– Is your tongue dried up? Have they caught your brother?

– No.

– So why are you silent?

– They are going to catch him...

– To catch him? – grinned Rahim. – Well so they caught him yesterday.

– Eh, you have not understood; remember, one of these days we went to a person's house?

– Yes!

– And so this person is the friend Anvar, he has been seized and being held hostage! He will be executed, if Anvar does not appear tomorrow!

These words brought both Dzhigits to terrible confusion, their anger and disgust flashed in their eyes.

– He is not a khan, he is a nasty dog! – cried out Kobil.

The same, if I would be a criminal, and instead of me Sharif would be executed. Really, he is not the khan, but a dog!

Kobil has bitten his lip and made a sign to be silent. But enraged Rahim continued to shout:

– Not a khan, but a dirty animal! And, what of him!

– Keep silence, – frightened Kobil said, as he rose. – You madman, what is the advantage of shouting!

Kobil ran up to doors of the bench and looked out to the street.

– Let me kill him, a bastard! Ah, what to do!?

Rahim was subjected to anger attacks. Kobil and Sharif well knew it. He did not except injustice whoever it concerned, and here as now, instantly came to fury. Having shouted for some time, Rahim calmed down.

Kobil in the meantime closed the door of the bench and returned to his friends. All three were silent for some time.

– In this frail world it is necessary to be kindness, Kobil, – said Rahim, and his eyes lighted up again. – How long is the distance to this khan?

– What is it for to know the distance?

– We are three, – Sharif told. – Tonight we either will be lost, or we will release the poor creature!

Kobil significantly looked at Sharif, and Sharif, in turn smiling, winked at Rahim.

– What wrong with you?

– Nothing! – answered Rahim. – With what we will leave this

light? We will die, what after us remains? Riches, whether that, or the beauty of a wife?

– Nothing will remain from us! – Sharif said having grinned.

– Put your hands, – told Rahim, stretching to both Sharif and Kobil.

And both of them, smiling, submitted to him hands.

– Do you give your word? – continued Rahim.

– We do! A true word, brave Rahim!

– Joking aside!

– Well finally!

– Well, then that's all! – told Rahim, having released their hands; – It is settled!

Friends moved off. The market noise still reached them. Those were the wandering monks near to the bench where

the Dzhigits sat and sang, the seller who sold the boiled sausages.

Kobilbay, sitting on the mat, silently played with a twig. At last he raised his head and started talking:

– I need to descend somewhere.

– At first it is necessary to find out, whether it is truth, that Sultanali was arrested. And if it is the truth, we will consult the brother, as it is better to operate not in vain.

Sharif liked this decision of Kobil and by a nod of his head he let us know, that he agrees with it.

– Well, go! While we sharpen our daggers. But don't be very late, wretch!

Sharif and Kobil grinned: Rahim said it all efficiently.

Kobil left the bench.

56

FAREWELL TO RANO

There are many strong and courageous women in our world. Some of them are even braver than men. Still, as much as they're courageous and brave feelings have an upper hand over them. Let's take the heroine of this novel, Rano. She protested against the Khan's tyranny and the involvement of Anvar in her struggle is a glowing example of courage even for modern girls.

Still her iron will was trapped in a cage made of feelings. The thing is that Anvar having counselled with his brother decided to escape from Kokand to Tashkent. Rano didn't have anything against leaving Kokand. Now thoughts, that everything had been decided primeval fear captured her soul at the same she thought of another brave idea. She decided to go to her makhalla escorted by an old woman. Hiding behind the gates of a neighboring house she invited her mother out for a conversation. She'd spent a whole

night pondering over her plan and told Anvar everything in the morning disappointing and shocking him. They sat by the sandal angry with each other.

– You can be misled easily. Danger awaits you everywhere. Even your mother can not be trusted.

– First of all, – objected Rano, – No one is going to recognize me if I put on paranja. It'd be a real miracle if they will. Secondly why can not I trust my mom?

– You escaped from your home... You brought disgrace upon your mother.

– Nothing of the kind! I know my mother well, she is not a woman as you think!

– All right, let's assume you will not be recognized and the old woman will be able to organize the meeting with your mother and your mother can be trusted. Still, can't you refuse this plan for my own sake, darling? Rano, I promise you to write your mother a detailed letter about our life in a new place and ask her to forgive us as soon as we get to Tashkent.

Rano began to cry and reply and kept crying for along time...

– Who knows, may be I'll never see my mother again!

Rano, Rano! – Anvar tried to comfort her – Do you think Khudayar will be alive for hundreds of years to come and we'll die in Tashkent? Who knows, may be he'll last for 5 more years ... If he is as aggressive as he now, he'll live less than 5... Life itself has proven that the more a person commits crimes and acts of violence the less he lives. If you aren't patient enough in waiting for his death, we'll figure out something. For some time we might invite your mother to Tashkent or come back to Kokand after some time, when everything is forgotten.

Rano kept silence. Tears were running down her cheeks. Anvar tired of persuading her also quieted down.

– All right, don't cry! We need to wait for two more days for our departure. My brother will come here at

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– All right, don't cry! We need to wait for two more days for our departure. My brother will come here at

night, he'll by all the things we need for the journey. It's still unknown if we'll be able to leave in the evening the day after tomorrow. So, you should not hurry. We might think up something. The thing you want to do is very dangerous, though...

Rano sighed with great relief, wiped her tears away with her handkerchief, but kept quiet. Anvar smiled, although his face still retained traces of offence and shook a finger at her jokingly. At that very moment someone knocked on the door from the outside. Rano and Anvar listened to this knocking intently and looked at each other interrogatively.

– It's our man, I guess, – said Anvar after sometime. – We agreed with Safar aka that he'd be knocking on the wall in the daytime. Go and tell the old women to open the door. Rano left the room and soon after some footsteps could be heard in the yard. Anvar's heart began to beat faster. Why is it so that Safar came at an unusual time? The door opened and Safar and Kobil came one after another. Anvar became worried. Safar had a worried look and caused Anvar's suspicions to rise again.

– You came here at an unusual time not without reason, didn't you?

He asked in a whisper – Did they learn our whereabouts? Safar looked excitedly at his companion and inserted his hands into the robe sleeves.

– No...

– Did they arrest Sultanali? – Again Anvar in a whisper and then added;

– I guess they did!

Safar and Kobil exchanged glances.

– Yes, sir you're right, he has been arrested! We're completely at a loss what to do.

Anvar went pale, his eyelashes began to flutter faster. – We'll set him free, I swear! When happened?

– Yesterday, in the evening. I got to know it from Sultanali's wife... She came to me in the morning ... Along with your brother....

– And you, Kobil aka, how did you learn about it?

Kobil told him about the town crier, and his friend's plan on how to cope with the problem.

Anvar listened to his brother seriously and sat in a silence pondering over it for some time.

– Thank you and your friends for caring, – said he. – We won't be able to free Sultanali in such an extreme way, though.

– If we know where Zindan Sultanali is, then it might be quite possible, Anvar! My friends are very brave people! Don't get worried about it!

– I'm very much mindful of that! Surely only brave people will venture to participate in such a terrible struggle. The reason why, I don't believe we'll be able to free Sultanali is that criminals like him are generally incarcerated in the palace prison.

– What are the chances of getting in there?

Anvar shook his head.

– Zero chance! Fifty guards patrol the inner walls all night long.

Kobil looked at Safar, who gnawed at his own moustache wrathfully with great sadness.

– If he's in Zindan, we might still be able to save him, right your honour? – asked Safar.

– There are some chances that he will, but you see, he's not going to be kept in Zindan, Safar aka!

They all quieted down. Kobil kept taking off his skull cap and scratching his head. Anvar moved with his fingers nervously, as if trying to pull a thread out of the blanket, that covered the sandal!

– It would be good, Anvar, if we could know for sure if he's in the Zindan or somewhere else!

- We can find it, though... Having heard this words Kobil addressed Safar.

- Let's send someone to Sultanali's house and tell his wife to go to check on him in the Zindan. What can you say, Safar aka?

- I think it's okay, brother!

- And you, Anvar?

Anvar nodded approvingly.

- Now, there's one more thing we need to tell you, - continued Kobil, - On our way here we spoke about... About the thing that it would be just great if you could leave this house. Sultanali is nothing but a man and his life is above anything else he might tell them about ...

Anvar shook his head, smiling.

- Sultanali is not like that, don't worry - He said confidentially and then began to think ... - As for his wife ... I'm not sure of her. A woman is ready to do everything to save her husband!

Safar said that when she came to see him in the morning and heard about Kobil and his friend's intention to save Sultanali, she felt relieved. You're done right, thanks. Tell the messenger to talk with her and explain her everything, pressure her, and persuade her that her husband will be out of prison by noon, tomorrow. If she doesn't believe, deceive her, say that if he's not out by the next morning Anvar himself will come to the palace and surrender. Tell her that haste makes waste - if she is not patient, her husband might get killed.

- Okay, dear Mirza, I will!

- Do me a favor, Safar aka - said Anvar. Safar was all ears

- Take Rano away from here ... She shouldn't stay here...

- All right, I will.

Anvar stood up, said he'd be back soon and left the room.

The blind old-man kept plugging away at cotton cleaning and the old-woman continued to spin chigirik.

Rano sat by the sandal, staring at something.

Having gone out to the yard, Anvar beckoned her to follow. They went off to a side.

– Did you hear that, Rano?

– Hear what?

– The things they spoke about?

– No!

– We're in a mess: our whereabouts might be discovered. Sultanali has been arrested. People are afraid he'll tell our enemies everything ...

Rano looked at him, her eyes widely open.

– Ah?

– Don't worry. Safar aka will take you away from here. I'll also leave. We'll have to part till everything is ready for our departure. Go and get dressed.

– Yes! Don't be afraid it's just a precaution. Nothing threatens us now that Sultanali is arrested, that's the only problem.

– My clothes are in the room...

– Then get dressed as soon as they leave the room.

Yong people came back to ayvan. Anvar went to the room.

– She's going to get dressed, – he said he entering the room. – It won't be all right if you walk together, so, you'll go a bit faster and she'll be following you from behind.

– It's a deal!

– Then Kobil aka, you will know what's happening in the Zindan. Come back here in the evening.

Kobil nodded in approval and went out together with Safar. Rano came in and began to put clothes on. Anvar feeling distressed and grieved looked at her pretty face attentively.

– Where will you go? – asked Rano.

– I... I'll go to my acquaintances, they ... they live not far away from here!

- No, it's too dangerous!

Rano sighed deeply. Parting is the worst thing in the world. She's already gotten dressed and took parandja into her hands. Anvar went to the corner of the room, beckoned Rano over, hugged and kissed her fervently.

- My brother will be visiting you. He'll tell you about me and help you, if you happen to need any help.

- Let us leave for Tashkent, please... I won't be able to wait more than 3 days

- All right Rano! Now let me kiss you one more time!

Rano smiled and turned her cheek to him. Anvar could not simply cease kissing her.

- That's enough, they're waiting for us!

He let go of her, saying;

- Take the money, Rano! I'm too absent - minded, I might lose.

Rano produced a wallet full of gold from under the kiyiz (floor cloth made of wool) in the corner of the room.

- Should I leave you a couple of golden coins, just in case?

Anvar shook his head, saying he did not need anything. Rano took out two golden coins and said:

- This money will be given to an aunty and the old man, one coin to each.

- Please do.... Well, see you, Rano!

She nodded and left the room. Anvar heard Rano saying good bye to the old people, who sat on the ayvan and his eyes swelled with tears. His heart began to beat faster, he felt an invisible burden upon his fragile shoulders and had to lean against the door.

DEATH DEFYING COURAGE

Kabilbay, having heard Anvar out couldn't believe his ears and came closer.

- What did you say, Anvar, I could not quite catch you!

Anvar repeated his words and Kobilbay jumped back, his eyes widely opened with horror.

- Do you my brother desire to do it? Will you go there yourself?! It's unthinkable! What if the Khan is just scaring us, to achieve his goals. Can't you think of it, my brother!

Anvar sat staring in one direction. His face wore an expression of firm determination. He moved some paper that layed on the table in Kobil's direction and said:

- What if he isn't? The Khan is a serious man, he won't be looking around. So, you're giving this letter to Rano tomorrow and doing your best to help her!

- Come off it, brother, its unreasonable!

- No, it's my decision - said Anvar firmly.

- I won't change my decision! I want one thing: I've got to be sure you'll do everything to help her!

Kobilbay sighed deeply, taking the letter. He sat for a while not saying anything then he jumped up and left the room.

-Where're you going?

- I'm leaving.

- So long and please forgive me!

Kobilbay didn't say anything.

It is midday: Sultanali is going to be executed in an hour. Life is going on in the palace, everything is in order. The Beks keep going through the main gates in satin kobes. People exult themselves in the Royal Chancellery; praying

for the muftiy's protection, young and promising scientist again works with them. His attractive appearance stands out from the rest of the scribes.

The Muftiys' faces are beaming from the happiness of a battle won, they joke and the eyes of a young Mirza shine gently, his lips part in a tender smile.

– Now he'll have to decide, – says Shakhodat. – He'll either betray Anvar or die!

– Yes, of course, – agrees mulla Abdurakhmon. – Even if he tells the whereabouts of Anvar, he will be punished ... Don't forget it!

– Punished for what? – asked Kalonshakh curiously.

– If he finds Anvar, it means he knew his whereabouts all along and organized his escape himself.

Kalonshakh was not satisfied with this concise answer. – It means that it is not his fault if he can't find Anvar. How would he find him anyway if he doesn't know his location?! In this case he'll be executed for nothing. Who'll take responsibility for? Whom will his blood be on? This is what puzzles me.

His interlocutors could not raise any objections and they grew silent. Chattering stopped abruptly. Mulla Kalonshakh feeling he was a victor got down to his work proudly.

Sultanali was supposed to be taken to the execution site at this moment. No one doubted he'd be executed; those who'd been sentenced to death by the Khan himself deserve no mercy. Even if he admits his crime, he'll be executed anyway. No one thought Anvar to be a true lion-hearted friend and to come to khan, thus preventing Sultanali from being executed.

It's true that the town-crier called Anvar out to exhibit mercy and not let the blood of the innocent get spilled. Could those who worked and lived in the palace, people corrupt to the bone believe that Anvar would do such a "crazy" thing?

But it did come to pass. Before that midday they saw a man with a great conscience, a man with the heart of a lion. They saw such a great man for the first time in their lives. He went to his death with smile on his lips, they were stupefied by his courage. Yes, even the watchdogs of tyrant couldn't remain indifferent; those who worked in the chancellery left their work places and came up to the door. Those who were walking out in the yard stopped in their tracks to look at this brave young man who walked calmly and greeted them.

Passing by the Khan's chancellery he bowed down to the scribes, who were hanging out from the doors and windows, he walked up the guards and stopped. He couldn't go further without special permission to be received by the Khan via Khudaychi. The Darvish stood by entrance, his hands folded. Anvar's appearance shocked him and he went in to tell about his arrival almost at. Khudayar sat on the throne relaxing. Two executioners stood in front of him. A few palace employees, the head vazir and the noble Tursun were engaged in a conversation with the Khan were also present.

- Your highest, - said Khudaychi, addressing the Khan.

- The criminal has voluntarily come here and wants to give himself into your hands.

- Which criminal?

- Mirza Anvar.

The Khan shuddered with surprise; everyone was shocked by this news.

- Bring him in!

Khudaychi hung his head and left the chamber.

Anvar causing people's surprise entered the chamber where the Khan sat. He stood at the threshold between the two executioners and bowed down to the Khan.

Khudayar seeing the courage of this rival began to shake with anger.

He kept opening and closing his mouth, not knowing what to say.

– You have betrayed us, son of a dog! – Finally he uttered.

Anvar nodded his head.

– I'm guilty!

– Did you forget all the good things I'd done to you? – It's so!

– Aha, you confessing your crime! Good for you! – Continued the Khan grinning maliciously – Are you ready to die?

– Yes, I haven't come here to beg for mercy, – said Anvar calmly. – I'm ready to die in order to save the innocent.

All the people present were quite surprised. Khudayar smirked evilly.

– So, you want to be like a real Muslim?

– Yes, some people forget they are Muslims and arrest innocent people who didn't commit anything badly. As for me, I prefer to meet death remaining a true Muslim!

Khudayar blushed to the top of his ears and beads of sweat appeared on his forehead on hearing that. He lost his temper.

– Do you think shariyat approves of your deeds, you rogue! – Say, The Mighty Khan, where is it said in shariyat that you, having hundreds of wives, have rights to force a poor man to give away his fiancée!

– Executioner, take him away!

The executioners, shouting "Our swords are thirsty for blood!" dashed at Anvar. He shook his head and scoffed at them.

– No sir, I won't leave this place until I am eyewitness of the innocent's release! – Anvar shouted pushing the executioners aside. – Where's your Justice, sir?!

Anvar's loud voice sobered Khudayar up. He told the executioners to stop and told Khudaychi to bring Sultanali in. Anvar, his eyes blood shot stood behind Khudayar, with his

hands in his pockets. Silence reigned in the Khan's chamber. Even Khudayar himself who'd curse in such situations, kept silence. He understood that for every bad word said, he'd get a crushing answer from Anvar. Saadi was right in saying that nothing frees a person's tongue more than the threat of his imminent death. It's quite so, for a man threatened by death, or seeking some benefit is always ready to do a low deed. The man who neglects benefits or is about to die, is not afraid of the Khan or of hell itself.

After a short period of time Khudaychi came in followed by Sultanali. Seeing Anvar, who stood nearby the Khan began to tremble. He took a place not far away from Anvar and still trembling bowed to the Khan.

– You're free to go, – said Khan. – Go to the chancellery and do your business.

Sultanali again bowed down to the Khan.

Anvar looked at Sultanali, scoffing.

– You've betrayed me to prove your loyalty to the Khan, but still ended up in the Zindan ... And I am an infidel as you've dubbed me and said you! Don't forget it, Sultanali aka! – Said Anvar and looked at the Khan – I'm ready. Let them bind me, take me out and execute!

Sultanali went out. Tears streaming down his face. The executioner began to bind Anvar's hands. Then a scientist named Mukhammad Niyaz stood up and bowing down to the Khan and said:

– Please forgive this sinful man for me.

The Khan turned away from Mukhammad Niyaz and told the executioners.

– Take him to the square!

Anvar, as if laughing at the Khan and his subordinates bowed down to them deeply. The executioner went ahead of Anvar with two armed guards at his sides followed him from behind. He was going to his imminent death being as proud as he had been entering the palace. Meeting his

acquaintances on the way, he'd glance at them as if saying "Farewell" Sultanali, who stood by the gates as pale as death looked at with grief. Sultanali followed Anvar with his eyes, till Anvar turned into a little speck. He thought his heart was crying copiously from all this grief.

The new square was full of people. Seeing the executioner moving in its direction with knife in one hand and halberd in the other. Anvar was walking right behind him as the crowd rushed to the square. Some of the people, however were moving in different directions. Disgust plainly was written on their faces. The square where all the executions took place was in the middle of the market and Royal garden. The gallows and blood pit stood at the brink of the garden.

People surrounded the gallows. The guards kept driving people away but they persisted in getting closer.

Anvar who was led right under the gallows was freed of his bind and given water for ablution. All the sentenced had a right for it. Anvar watched closely by guards and executioner went through the ablution and spread his robe onto the ground. The circle of guards stepped aside and Anvar prayed. He stood up then, let them bind again his hands and looked around cautiously.

The onlookers formed one long line. Mulla Abdurakhmon was making his way to the front row. Anvar caught his malicious glance and started. Mulla Abdurakhman grinned obscenely.

— You can laugh Mulla, you've taken your revenge! — Said Anvar loudly.

All eyes were on Abdurakhman.

— But you laugh by playing dirty tricks and I get the fruits of truth. You won due to your dirty conscience. I lost because my conscience is clear. What brought me to the gallows, if not my conscience, Mulla?

What brought you here to watch my demise, if not your low morality?

The people, kept dead silence and looked at Mulla with profound disdain.

Anvar was taken closer to the gallows. He sat down and motioned the executioner to wait a little. He came up to him unsheathing his knife. Then, with a smile on his lips, he addressed Abdurakhman.

— Look at me, Mulla, my hands are bound. The knife threatens to bereave me of my life, and still I laugh ... Why? Because I enjoy a clear conscience peace of my mind. My heart is full of love! Yes, I'll die now, I'll be buried! Red tulips will blossom on my grave. These are black wounds made by you and other low people!

A slight shiver ran through the crowd. Anvar lied down. The executioner bent over him ...

At this very second someone pushed the executioner hard enough to kick him sprawling into the pit. A few strong hands grabbed the armed guards, not letting them move. With a resonant slap, Mulla Abdurakhman fell down to the ground preceded by his turban.

Disturbances began among people. Kabilbay, cut Anvar's hands free and they disappeared into the crowd in the general turmoil. Confused and disarmed guards began to arrest whoever they could. Meanwhile, the executioner covered in gore tried hard to climb out the pit.

* * *

Two days later, the midnight... Four silhouettes appeared by the gates of Besharyh and Khodjent. The 22 day old moon was just rising. At that moment, everything was immersed in darkness. These people began to climb the wall one by one and examined the surroundings. One of them reached the wall top. Moonlight shines and we see that it is Safar the weaver. He sees a bare hill on the other side of the Stonghold...

The moon hides in the mist ...Bare tree boughs loom in the distance.

Safar helped his friends up, one by one. Anvar went up first. Rano in her parandja was the next, Sultanali with a rope in his hands came last. He came to the edge of the wall carefully and looked down.

– Eight arshins, – he whispered, – Come over here Anvar!

Anvar was tied up by the rope, Sultanali and Safar hugged him goodbye and began to help him down, holding the rope tightly.

– I've reached the ground, pull! – He said.

The rope was taken back up. Now it was Rano's turn to descend.

– Hold the rope tightly! Be careful, lean against the walls! Good luck, sister!

– Remember me to your wife and uncle!

Rano spinning on the rope came down to the ground where she was caught by Anvar.

– Let me go!... I'll do it myself...

– There's aryk here, don't get into the mud.

Anvar carried Rano a few more steps and put her to the ground beneath the "Tuya toydi" aryk. Rano freed herself from the rope and it went up at once. Anvar went back to the wall and called.

– Sultanali aka!

Sultanali shadow loomed overheard.

– Be careful Sultanali aka. Try to be back within this week. And please don't show yourself anywhere!

– I won't, don't worry!

Sultanali disappeared the day Anvar was freed. Although the Khan did not threaten him, he decided to be wary. He had to deal with some of his domestic affairs and was able to leave in a week's time.

Anvar came back to Rano and said "Good bye" to his friends. – Good bye, Sultanali aka, see you Safar aka!

- Good bye, uncles!
- Good luck, God bless you Anvar!
- Have a good journey!

One of them cried at the top of the wall. Anvar went right behind Rano towards the tree that stood in the distance. They walked very slowly, the road was muddy. Having made 20 steps Rano stopped. Her shoe got stuck in the mud, she couldn't take another step. Anvar came up to her and lifted girl up.

- I'm in boots... Keep silence till we reach the main road!
- They are looking at from the wall, I feel embarrassed ...

Anvar did not answer. Having taken 30 steps he let Rano down and waved to his friends who still stood on the walls.

They went on walking. Soon two riders came out from behind the tree and approached them. One of them gave a horse's bridle to Anvar saying:

- Mount the horse!

It was Rakhim. He helped Anvar up and Rano sat behind him; the other horse was for Rakhim and Sharif.

Again Anvar looked up at the walls. Two shadows still loomed there. He waved to them again and ordered his horse to trot.

Arba stood by another tree in deep shadows. Kobilbay left the shadows to meet the riders Rano and Anvar got into the Arba and Rakhim took his own horse. He and Sharif mounted their horses and followed Arba out to the main road.

Arba's wheels went "shack - shuck", whenever they drove over some stone. Gradually Arba and the riders turned into small specks in the horizon. Only slight noises of wheels could still be heard.

ANVAR'S ULTERIOR LIFE

I heard this story from my late father. Mirza Anvar having escaped Kokand had found asylum in Tashkent and spent a few years in the famous Eski - Djuva makhal-la. Our house was there then and we used to be neighbors. This is what my father told me:

- People kept gossiping about this scribe who came here from Kokand and rented a flat here or there. I heard a lot of him but never saw him in flesh. Once in the days of the fast when all the people left the mosque after praying Sufi told us: "Khudayar Khan's scribe invites us to break the fast". All twenty of us went there.

One of the rooms along with ayvan was covered by rugs and quilts. There was exquisite food everywhere. As soon as they all took their seats a handsome djigit appeared in the door. "Welcome", - he said. It was Mirza Anvar himself. We tasted his food and asked the host how did he like it here, in Tashkent and whether he was ok? "You see, I decided to become a citizen of Tashkent", - he laughed. Mirza Anvar cooked the most favorite meal of all Tashkent dwellers - Norin. We gave him our due. Shortly before the thanksgiving prayer Mulla along with few other people left the room. We were surprised, not understanding what it might mean. They soon came back, though. When all the empty bowls were removed and it was high time for fatikha they put a bowl full of water in front of Mulla and he began the engagement rite. We are all extremely surprised. It turned out Mirza Anvar was supposed to marry some girl. Mulla held "Nikah" Prayer, then we all prayed for their happiness and went home surprised at such an unusual engagement ceremony. Soon some other friends of mine made friends with Mirza Anvar. We began to invite him over to our places and

once he told us his story. We were very much amazed. We began to like him even more since then.

My dad says Anvar lived in Tashkent quite peacefully. Khudayar was unable to lay his hands on him, for Tashkent, which was controlled by the Russians. Anvar was in a terrible need, he worked for several bays in the capacity as the Head scribe, still he did not have work. In two years he received Khan's letter which said that Khan forgave him and wanted him back Kokand. Anvar and Rano who grew weary of being constant need decided to go back to Kokand almost at once. After four months from their departure to Kokand someone who came to Tashkent, said Anvar was put to death.

My dad did not know what was he put to death for. It's still unknown if it was because Anvar's old sins or was it Mulla Abdurakhman's tricks ...

I went to Kokand to conduct a small research on it. I talked to the oldtimers. There was an old scribe among them who, although he'd never worked at the Royal Chancellor knew many scribes who did. So, he says Anvar was not executed. He outlived Khudayar, and met his own death.

So, I got stuck between these two versions and I don't know how to end Mirza Anvar's story...

Abdulla Qodiriy (Julkunboy)
Toshkent, February 15, 1928 y.

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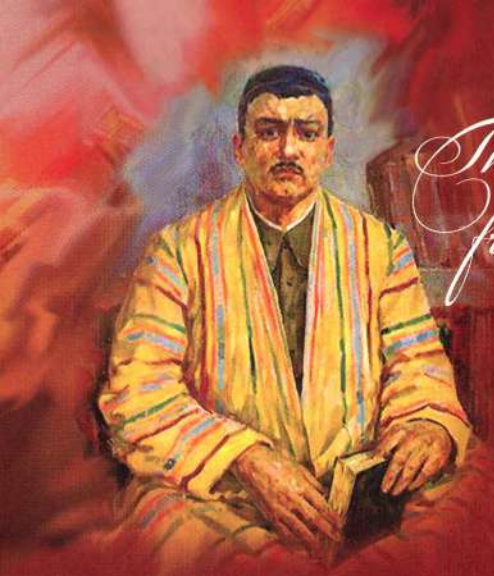
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The Scorpion from the Altar

NOVEL

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Abdulla Qodiriy (April 10, 1894 - October 4, 1938) was one of the famous Uzbek poets, translators and writers. Qodiriy was the most influential Uzbek writer of the 20th century. He introduced realism to the Uzbek literature with his historical novels. His most famous works are the historical novels "The Days Gone By" (1922) and "The Scorpion from the Altar" (1929). "The Scorpion from the Altar" is the first full-length novel written by the Uzbek writer.



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