

selected works of

BAHTIYAR VAHABZADE

poems,
short stories
and a play



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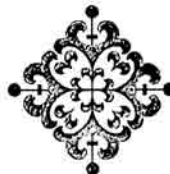
Poems, Short Stories and a Play

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BAHTİYAR VAHABZADE
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Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications
Azerbaijan Literature and Culture Series I

General Editor: İlhan Başgöz

A-33221



Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications
Bloomington, Indiana



Published by:
Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications

Address: 147 Goodbody Hall, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA
Tel/Fax: (812) 855-0705
E-mail: turkish@indiana.edu
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and Prof. Kemal Silay.

Series:
Azerbaijan Literature and Culture Series I

The publication of this book was funded by Haydar Aliyev, the honorable president of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Indiana University Turkish Studies Program gratefully acknowledges his generous contribution.

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First Edition: 1997

Library of Congress Catalog Card No: 97-072927

ISBN: 1-878318-13-6

Design and typesetting by Destiny Design (Savaş Elekçi)
Cover design by Destiny Design (Savaş Elekçi)
E-mail: destiny@cyberservices.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Autobiography

Bahtiyar Vahabzade

Trans. Shouleh Vatanabadi

I was born on August 16, 1925 in Shaki, mountainous a historic city in Azerbaijan. I remember the mountains of Shaki were covered with oak, elm, pistachio, and willow trees. So most of the inhabitants of this area made their living as woodcutters. They dug big holes in their yards where they burned logs and sold the charcoal at town market. My grandfather, father and uncles were all woodcutters. When I was a child, I went with them to bring logs to the city. Each day we made several trips to the woods and brought back logs on the backs of our donkeys.

I am still fascinated by the woods and mountains where I spent most of my childhood. These green mountains were the setting for the fairy tales that my grandmother used to tell me. The heroes of these tales wore iron shoes, held iron canes in their hands, and set out for these same mountains in search of their loved ones. Every winter my father would point to the snow covered mountains seen from our yard and say. "All our wishes lie behind these mountains." In my childhood dreams, I used to fly over the mountains. In those mountains, my dreams would come true.

My brother, Isfandiyar, was four years older than I. When I was seven, he would take me to school with him. In those days, children started school at the age of eight.

In 1934, my family moved to Baku. Since I didn't know any Russian, I was not allowed start fourth grade. I repeated third grade.

It took me a long time to get accustomed to Baku and its very different dry nature. In Baku, my father was a worker in the silk factory for a long time. After becoming ill, he worked as a waiter and then as a cook at a restaurant. My mother, Gulzar, was a housewife. She didn't know how to read or write, but she had a very good memory and a rich imagination. She would always tell me her own versions of the fairy tales. Sometimes, in order to give me advice, she would come up with her own stories. My grandfather, father, and all of my uncles were illiterate, except for an uncle, named Alisharaf, who had studied a few years at the religious school and knew how to read and write. My elder brother was the first educated person in our family.

In 1942, I finished high school and entered Azerbaijan State University to study Philology. I wrote my first poems when I was at high school. Of course, they were rather immature and lacked literary value. At the university I was a member of the literary society established by our distinguished writer and professor Mir Jalal. This was crucial in my literary career.

In those days, all that mattered in a poetic style was the rhetoric. Emphasis was on the form of the literary work; the subject matter had no importance. However, a younger generation of poets such as A. Babyev, N. Ganjali, N. Khazri, Ghabil and H. Huseinzada, were trying to distance themselves from this style and be more attentive to the issue of content.

In this effort works such as, "Manam" (That's Me) by N. Ghanjali, "Gumush Sarv" (The Silver Cedar) by N. Khazri, "Chinar" (The Sycamore) by A. Babayev, "Gara Shani (Black Grape) by Gabil, and my "Yeshil Chaman Agaj Altı (Grass Under the Tree)], were

steps toward a new poetic style. These poems attracted the attention of S. Vurgun and Mehdi Hussein, who were prominent Azerbaijani poets.

In 1945, with the recommendation of S. Vurgun, who was then the chair of the writer's union in Azerbaijan, I was accepted as a member of the Soviet Union's writer union. In 1949, my first book, "Manim Dostlarım" (My Friend's), and in 1950, my second book, "Bahar" (Spring) were published.

I have been an admirer of S. Vurgun ever since I was a young boy. I wrote my thesis, "Samad Vurgun's Lyrics" in 1951, and later in 1964, I defended my doctoral dissertation, "Samad Vurgun's Artistic Path." After finishing the university, I remained active as a poet. I was employed, first as an assistant professor and then a professor, at the university. Did my career as a teacher interfere with my creative work? Not at all. First of all, being with young people and learning of their desires and feelings inspired me and gave me a youthful spirit. Young life is inexhaustible, like a spring of imagination. Secondly just like writing, the objective of teaching is to awaken beautiful feelings in people and make them think. Thus, both careers shared a common objective. Chekov's saying, "Medicine is my wife, and writing my lover," applies to me as well. In the prologue of my poem, "Giyimat" (value), I refer to this issue:

My days and hours are divided in half,
time is my wealth,
teaching my life,
poetry, my passion.

In my essays I have addressed this issue as well as other problems concerning our literature.

My critics consider me a poet with ties to tradition and custom. In a situation where people must conform like chickens in an incubator, customs and traditions become very valuable. Uniformity is the enemy of art. Constantly in search of new colors, art and literature demand vividness and diversity. To speak of tradition is to be faithful to one's roots. Art needs tradition like a tree requires

roots to stay alive. Then what about modernism? I see modernism as being connected to the root, but giving life to very different branches. One should keep up with the spirit of the time and changing thoughts. New thoughts and sensations create new forms. But one should not create forms just for the sake of forms. They will be like herbs dried in winter. They might seem fine, but isn't there a difference in the taste of a raisin dried in the heat of the natural sun?

A poet must wash his feelings, sensations and thoughts in the currents of the day. Only the poet who keeps up with the ideas of his time can communicate with readers. However, I don't believe in the kind of modernism that directs an artist to search for new ideas outside his own culture. These artists are only imitating others. I have written a short story about this very issue called, "My Grandmother's Carpet."

"Every heart has a new voice
Be yourself, be new
you'll be old if you imitate."

The aim is to live with the feelings of the time, and to animate them. Form by itself is not an aim: it is only a medium. In my creative life I have never been bound to form. What has moved me and set me going has been my thoughts and feelings. Form doesn't limit thought. Form is created in a process at one with the subject. When you limit yourself to a preconceived form, you limit your expression. Take couplets, for example. The words in this case cannot be removed or else the whole structure will collapse.

So far, I have 40 books published in Azerbaijani, 12 in Russian, 2 in Armenian, 2 in Uzbek, 3 in Turkish, and 1 in German. Since 1965, my plays such as, "Vijdan" (Conscious), "Ikinji Sas" (The Second Voice), "Yagishdan Sonra" (After the Rain), "Yollara Iz Dushur" (Traces in The Paths), and "Faryad" (City), have been performed at the Azerbaijani State Theatre. Some of the plays have also been performed in Armenian, Turkmen and Uzbek languages.

As a tourist and government representative, I have traveled to different countries such as Iraq, Morocco, Greece, Italy, Turkey,

Germany, England, Portugal and Egypt. I have written my impressions of these trips in the form of essays and poetry. I have also translated some works by writers that I like. These translations have been published in a book called "Har Chichakdan Bir Lachak" (Of Each Flower a Petal).

Reflecting upon my work, I can say that those that have come from my heart, passionately felt, have been more successful. Those that I have written without feeling for their subjects, have died in infancy. Those works written out of intense feeling have found a way into my readers hearts. What is love? What is hate? The storm of one's heart and the rebellion of one's mind. Without loving, how can one write about love? My works are the voice of my passions and concerns. In my Art, I am more myself because I feel more sincere.

Sincerity is the heart and the major blood vessel of literature. My poems reflect my love, a love that is my nature. Because of the need to love, I create. I will always have this need as long as I live. From the beginning of my career as a poet, I have drawn energy and inspiration from this love.

The biography of every writer is really the history of his work. I was born in that year, went to school in this year and wrote such and such works and received such and such prizes: these are just superficialities. In the works of a poet one must look for the voices of his people. A classical writer once said, "I have not created my works, my works have created me." This is true. A writer in creating his work, creates himself. A writer's name, which is given by his parents, later becomes a symbol. The name Alexander and the surname Pushkin, are very common in Russia, but the poet has made this name a significant one. In some cases, poets adopt pen names, and history remembers them by these names. Fizzulim, one of Azerbaijan's most famous poets for example, was given the name Mohammed by his father. This is a very common name, where as, the pen name Fizzuli is very unique. Because of this poet's fame, parents now name their sons Fizzuli. In our legendary epic "Dada Gurgut," people don't name their newborns. It isn't given until the

child grows up and adopts a profession, then he is addressed by that profession. In this epic, people create themselves through their work.

I understand life as a process of burning and melting. To me, living is burning for something and melting one's life for a purpose. My readers once asked, "What is the driving force behind your works?" To be honest, I had never thought of that, then I remembered my poem, "My Poems, My Belief." I answered that question by reading the poem. This poem explains that poems are a poet's belief and his way of thinking. For this reason when we write the biography of a poet, we must search through the artist's work, not a list of meaningless dates.

To be a poet, one must feel the pain of others. My heart is open to pain and suffering around the world. I seek inspiration through this pain that my heart translates into poetry. Such poems as "Baş" (Head), "Dan Yeri" (Seed-bed), "Elm-Akhlagh" (Knowledge - Morality), "Tabbasum Ordeni" (Smile), "Gurbanlıq Guzu" (Sacrificial Lamb), "Sulh Mukafatı" (Peace Prize), "Netron Bombası" (Neutron Bomb), "Göz Ya Gulag" (Eyes or Ears), "Şairleri Öldürürler" (They are Killing the Poets), "Tarihin Ganunu" (Laws of History), "Tazadlar" (Contradictions), "Amerikan Gözalı" (American Beauty), "Bağışlayın Sahn Olup" (Sorry, There Has Been A Mistake), and some others, have been disseminated in newspapers around the world. The point in publishing these poems was not just for their aesthetic value, but because they voiced issues to the world. In these poems, of course, lie the future and the fate of my country. My book, "Bir Gamida Safardayuk" (We Are All Traveling in One Boat), addresses this issue particularly. A concerned citizen of one's own country, is also a citizen of the world.

Contradictions exist both within nature and in the human mind. In my poems, as well as other forms of writing, I always show these contradictions. The characters in my plays have both Othello and Iago within them.

I am aware of contradiction within myself as well. I have been critical of myself ever since my childhood. In my poem, "Who

Is My Enemy," I say that if I could read the mind of those who are critical of me, I could be a very good person. In my opinion, a person who thinks too highly of himself is indeed very small. An old Azerbaijani proverb says, "The strongest champion is the one who knows how to beat himself."

I work during the night. This is the time when I can achieve a dialogue with myself. I work for long hours and find relaxation in it. On days that I don't work, I don't feel good about myself.

Since 1985, with M. Gorbachev's efforts to create an open society in the Soviet Union, Soviet authors, including Azerbaijani authors, have started writing in different and new ways. The Iron Curtain which fell between writers and their work has lifted and they have begun to openly express the suffering which occurred under dictatorial regimes, especially the repressive Stalin era. My poem, "İki Gorku" (Two Fears), written in 1988, is about the repression of writers, including myself, during that period. That year, I also published my poem "Gülüstan," that I wrote years before, but hid until that time.

My protest against the dictatorial Soviet regime was not, however, limited to these two poems. During the repression, I always managed to voice my protest and criticism by masking it with a different time frame and geographical setting. In reality, I spoke of contemporary issues and my own society in historical allegories like, "Dar Ağacı" (Gallows) 1972, "Yollar Oğulları" (The Ways The Boys) 1963, and my play "Faryad" (Cry) 1981-1984. The works that I have attributed to different subjects include, "America Gözalı" (American Beauty) 1982, "Marziya" 1983, and "Bağışlayın Sahn Olup" (Sorry There Has Been A Mistake) 1983. Among the works in which I have used other geographical locations are, "Latin Dili" (The Latin Language) 1967, "Şairleri Öldürürler" (They Kill the Poets) 1978, "Hyde Park" 1978, and "Ehramların Onunda" (Before the Pyramids) 1959. I should add that when some officials found out about the real intent of my works, my name was put on the black list. I expected to be arrested that day, but this never stopped me from continuing my work.

The newly established openness in the Soviet Union unlocked the lips of the people and writers, but other problems, were unfortunately created over questions of nationality. For this my country paid a very high price. During the regional dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Soviet tanks, in violation of the constitution, invaded my country. As a result many people, including children and the elderly, lost their lives. This was one of the fruits of the reforms aimed toward so-called democracy. The most horrifying fact about that event was that the soldiers were not only shooting at people in the street, but at houses through the windows. What was the cause of this violence? The answer is clear. The Moscow government wanted to suppress nationalistic aspirations of the people and their demand for independence. This was an effort to maintain the Soviet imperialistic power over us. How could one stay silent against these atrocities? In protest, along with tens of thousands of people, I renounced my membership in the Communist Party. Many questions about that invasion remain unanswered.

I am considered Azerbaijan's people's poet. I have received recognition and many prizes for my works. Many people, drunk with fame and popularity, just doze off. To me this is very dangerous. An artist must know how to awaken from this sleep.

A-33221

POEMS

М. Ғ. Ахундов а. а.
Азәрб. Республикасы
КИТАБХАНАСЫ

I Love

*The eclipse I love
It shall give birth to the sun,
The sun for sure!*

*Harsh winter I love
It shall give birth to hot summer,
Hot summer for sure!*

*Hatred's climax I love
It shall give birth to love,
Love for sure!*

*Tyranny's pain I love
It shall give birth to justice,
Justice for sure!*

1979

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

Severim

*Severim havanın tutulmağını,
O, güneş doğacak¹,
O, güneş ancak!*

*Severim kışın da sert olmağını
Sıcak yaz doğacak,
Sıcak yaz ancak!*

*Severim nefretin tam son haddini,
O, sevgi doğacak,
O, sevgi ancak!*

*Severim zulmün de meşeggetini
Adalet doğacak,
Adalet ancak!*

1979

¹: Doğuracak.

Echoes

*If you climb to the top of a towering hill,
And sigh and hear and answering sigh, then only
Will you know
That at the top of a towering hill,
You can never be lonely.*

*If you descend to the bottom of a deep ravine,
And sigh and hear an answering sigh, then only
Will you know
That at the bottom of a deep ravine,
You can never be lonely.*

*Echoes born of the heights
And echoes born of the deep
But lightly sleep.*

*At the top of a towering hill,
At the bottom of deep ravine,
Dead rock acquires a soul....
Call out,
And you will hear the echoes roll.*

1967

Translated by Irina Zheleznova

Aksiseda

*Eğer kalksan
Yüce dağlar zirvesine
Ses alırsın öz sesine.
O zaman sen
Deme teksin.*

*Eğer insan
Derin derin
Derelerin terkinde¹ sen.
Ses alırsın sesine sen,
Sakın deme, deme teksin...*

*Aksiseda !
... Bu ses nedir?
Aksiseda derinlikte,
Aksiseda zirvededir.*

*Derinliğe inmiş olsan,
Yüceliğe kalkmış olsan,
Cansız taşsan, kayadan da
Sesine ses alacaksın.*

1967

1: Son kögesine, dibine.

Wind and Grass

"The ruler is the wind and his people the grass which leans towards where the wind blows."

Confucius

*"The sovereign is a raging wind
And his people, standing before him,
Bow their heads like rustling grass,
Whichever way the wind blows,"
This truism by Confucius
Held sway
Over all rulers for centuries,
The axis around which spun
So many countries.
This powerful maxim
Fluttered through the ages
On national flags.
When the wind raged - the simoom!
Filling mouths with dust and stone,
Thoughts became petrified in brains
And hearts were scorched.
In the rulers' hands
The metaphor turned into a torch,
In their mouths, into a shibboleth.
Beauty was branded ugly,
And ugly was made lovely.
The earth's bosom became parched,
Rivers stopped flowing,*

1: Strong wind.

*Not a drop of truth trickled any more.
The ship of state had a liar at the helm.
Listen to the wise words,
Then look at the distortion.
All this injustice
Rocked heaven and earth
For centuries.
What can one say about
"Greatness"
"Power?"
The wind blew
Now from faith, then from doubt,
From this side or that side
And the grass, heads bowed,
Burned inside. Whichever way
The wind blew.
The grass bowed...
The wind blew
Thinking
This obeisance is homage to its power.
Cruel wind,
Never think this genuflection is worship of tyranny.
It is because he is afraid
That the ruler causes this trembling
And this bending down,
Would you believe
That he who inspires fear
Is frightened himself?
Open your heart and ask:*

Faced with fear
 You too are just like the grass
 You frighten.
 You wouldn't hide behind it
 If you hadn't known this terror
 The way the grass does.
 But you ought to know this:
 Affection earns respect,
 Terror commands hatred...
 When hate oozes drop by drop
 The mountain is bound to collapse;
 Rocks are carved inside out.
 Cruel wind,
 Never forget that cloud
 The roars
 And rumbles
 With its thunderbolts
 Will end up as water.
 If you blow from the right,
 The grass will sway left,
 Not right.
 What is the secret of bending that way?
 This reverence will not know.
 Turning one's back at falsehood
 Is bowing before truth.

1976

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

Rüzgâr, Ot

"Hükümdar rüzgâra, halk ota benzer.
 Rüzgâr nereye esse, ot da o tarafa eğilir."
 Konfçiyus

"Hâkim, deli bir rüzgâra,
 Halksa onun önünde
 Tir tir esen ota benzer.
 Hangi yana rüzgâr esse,
 O tarafa ot, "baş eğir."
 Konfçiyus'un bu ihkâmı¹
 Yüzyıllarla oldu bütün hâkimlerin
 İlk hâkimi.
 Döndürdü kendi başına
 Memleketi mehver² gibi.
 Kelama bak
 Yüz yüz yıllar
 Bir ülkenin bayrağında
 Dalgalandı,
 Rüzgâr esti semum³ gibi,
 Ağızlara taş tıkanı,
 Beyinlerde fikir dondu,
 Yürek yanar.
 Kelam dönüp hakimlerin ellerinde
 Meşel⁴ oldu.
 Ağızlarda mesel oldu.
 Güzel çirkin damgastıyla
 Damgalandı,

1: Anlaması. 2: Mihver. 3: Çok şiddetli ve sıcak bir rüzgâr, şam yeli. 4: Meşale.

Çirkin döñtöp güzel oldu.
 Yerin gögsü cadar cadar⁵,
 Akmazlarda donup kaldı,
 Süzülmedi hakikatin bir damlası
 Yalan devlet maşınının⁶ dümenisi.
 Kelama bak,
 ihkâma bak!
 Haksızlığı,
 Yüz yüz yıllar sığışmadı
 Yere, göge.
 Ne diyesin
 Bu sözdeki turnak içi
 "Büyüklüğe"
 "Müdrıklüğe"?
 Rüzgâr esti
 Kah imandan, kah gümandan,
 Kah o yandan, kah bu yandan
 Otlar eydi başlarını
 Öz içinden yana yana,
 Kah o yana, kah bu yana.
 Rüzgâr esti...
 Öyle sandı,
 Kudretine tapınmadır bu eğilme,
 Zalim rüzgâr,
 Zulme olan tapınmayı serde bilme!
 Korkudandır
 Bu titretme,

Bu eyilme.
 Başkasını korku ile korkudanın
 Kendi korkar
 İnanır mısın?
 Aç kalbini sen ona sor.
 Bu korkunun karşısında,
 Sen kendin de
 Korkuzduğun dehşetini
 Bilmeseydin ot gibi sen.
 Fakat bunu bilmelisin.
 Muhabbete saygı olur,
 Korkuyasa nefret olur.
 Nefret sızar damla damla,
 Nihayette dağ dağılır,
 Taş oyulur.
 Zalim rüzgâr,
 Unutma ki güç, yahut hız suya döner
 Nerilmeyen,
 Gümlüdeyen,
 Şimşek olup çakan bulut.
 Eger sağdan değil,
 Sol tarafa eğilir ot,
 Bu tarafa eğilmenin sırrı nedir?
 Bu saygıya eğilme yok,
 Bu yalana sırt çevirme,
 Hakikate eğilmedir.

Knock the Fences Down

Everyone puts up a fence around his own field
Saying: "On this side of the fence, mine is the yield."
Come, tear the fences down, demolish the ramparts
So that our eyes can gaze at distant parts.
How can rooms contain the heart that must live free:
It should leap over hill and valley on and on.
So long as my eyes possess the power to see,
I shall keep scanning the widening horizon.
Never go the way of the flowers, of the rose,
Never put their hearts in death's throes.
Nature is free:
Never hold
It inside the fortresses, in captivity.
We must refuse to play a game of backgammon
Sequestered into squares inlaid with gold.
Out hearts should keep growing and soaring on and on
Like the ever-broadening, endless horizon.
Come, tear the fences down, demolish the ramparts
So that our eyes can gaze at all the distant parts.

1965

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

Yıkın Çeperleri

Herkes öz bağını hız çeperliyor,
"Çeperden bu yana benimdir" diyor.
Yıkın çeperleri, taş hisarları,
Gözler uzaklara dikilsin bari.
Gönül odalara sığır mı tekce,
O atlansa gerek dağdan, dereden.
Bakmak istiyorum göz işledikçe
Uzanan o geniş ufuklara ben.

Tutmayak¹ çiçeğin, gülün yolunu,
Onların gönlünü dağ dağ etmektir²
Tabiat serbesttir, geliniz onu
Hisarlar içine tutsak etmektir.

Tavlanın üstünde sedef zer gibi
Haneler içinde oynamayak biz
O geniş o sonsuz ufuklar gibi
Büyüsun, yücelsin yüreklerimiz.
Sökün çeperleri, taş hisarları,
Gözler uzaklara dikilsin bari.

1965

1: Sınırlamayak, karıştırmamak. 2: Zülm etmek.

Bounds of the Earth

*We daubed colors on the map at the outset
To divide the world into many countries.
The earth is one color everywhere - and yet
Why did we break it into a hundred pieces?*

*Every kind declared: "The world belongs to me."
Over and over again, we split the land;
But the earth never had a new boundary:
It never shrank
nor
did it ever expand.*

1964

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

Dünyanın Hududu

*Harita üstünde renklerle erken,
Dünyayı ayırdık memleketlere.
Her yerde toprağın rengi bir iken
Neden biz ayırdık onu yüz yere?*

*Her kral "bu dünya benimdir" dedi,
Yeniden kaç defa bölündü toprak.
Dünyanın hududu hiç değişmedi,
Ne bütyüdü,
Ne de
Küçüldü ancak.*

1964

Speed

*Time was, I'd sit in the fast train
Baku-Moscow
three days and three nights
counting the versts
for want of better to do.*

*And now, three hours by plane
Baku-Moscow
and here I am again
bored stiff...*

*I want to fly
with the speed of light,
but when I do I'll seem to hang
in the firmament
motionless
suspended
on frozen wings.
Why can't I fly as swift
as my own thoughts?
I'm not trying to be clever;
I'm a son of the century,
and it's just that the age is a
striving a
driving
age.*

*I want to fly higher and faster
to get ahead of my thoughts
to get ahead of
myself!*

1963

Translated by Alex Miller

Sür'at

*Bir zaman vardı
Kilometre direklerini saya saya,
Üç güne varırdık
Moskova'ya
Üzülürdük,
Bu süratin ağırlığına,
Sonra uçtuk sekiz saatta,
Üzülürdük,
Sıkıldık yine...
Şimdi üç saata indi uçuş süresi,
Yolun uzunluğu yine sıkıyor bizi,
Işıktan almak istiyoruz
Süratimizi.
Yok!
Bu sürat da bize azdır, az!
Bu sürat
Düşünce hızımıza ulaşamaz.
Ben asrın oğluyum,
Asrın!
Üzülmemekçin,
Sıkılmamakçın,
Haydi, bana...
Fikrimin süratini,
Düşüncemin hızını verin.
Haydi.
Çabuk olun!
Siz insan idrakının
Süratini bulun!*

1963

Observatory

I. You are a Small Building

Just a small place -
 The observatory,
 Yet you stand to outface
 The Universe!
 The end of your probing cannot be found.
 You study the infinite.
 The field of your search can have no bound.
 Your feet on the earth you firmly place,
 While your head you thrust though the sky.
 And look from the heights of outer space
 Down upon our planet.
 There is no bigger window for man's eye
 In all the universe than you...
 "Wait for me," calls Mother Earth,
 "I shall follow through!"
 Full of hope,
 So proud of your worth!
 For she has heard you called
 The brains of our old world
 Which, predestined,
 Through space is hurled.
 For you
 The daylight
 Is dark midnight!
 For starlight you reach -
 That's your ABC -
 Its thread runs through your speech.

At night fall you see
 Curved horizons close -
 The heaven's eyelids part,
 Astronomers then know
 Their days' work will start.
 For many years
 on far
 They throw light
 On some distant, glinting star.
 Just a small place -
 Yet each night
 Your guests - new worlds -
 Come face to face...
 In your confines nigritude
 In clarity dissolves.
 The windows of your building.
 Revolves upon new dawns...
 Your edifice stretches out
 its peaceful hand
 To ages yet to come
 On the mountain top you stand
 a monument to the morrow,
 While out there is space,
 Star-eyed, there glows
 A bright tomorrow,
 Confined within your space
 The future is born and grows.

1967

Translated by Tom Botting

Rasathane**I. Sen Ufak Bir Yapısın**

Eyrenle durmuşsun yüzbeyüz,
 Araştırmaların sonsuz
 Emellerin sonsuza kadar.
 Bitmez tükenmez,
 Meydanın ölçüsüz...
 Ayakların yerdeyse,
 Emellerin göktedir,
 Gökten baktın yere sen
 Kainata açılan
 En iri penceresin.

"Bekle, gelirim" diye
 Hep güvenir, övür
 Bugün anam yer sana.
 Yerin göklerde gezen
 Akıl dediler sana.
 Karanlık gecelerdir
 Günüñ,
 Gündüzün senin.
 Yıldızların ışığı
 Alfaben,
 Sözüñ senin.

O kapanan ufuklar,
 Münecimin
 Her gece
 Açılan kirpikleri.

Onlar yıllardan beri
 Bir yıldızın parlayan
 Işığını heceler,
 Sen ufak bir yapısın,
 Nice nice dünyalar
 Konuğundur geceler.

Bu binada eriyip
 Gece dönür şehere,
 Bu binadan açılır
 Şehirlere pencere...

Bu yapı bu günlerin
 Yarınki hoş günlere
 Uzayan tunç elidir.
 Bu yapı dağ başında
 Sabahın heykelidir.
 Yıldızların gözüyle
 Bize bakıp uzaktan
 Işık saçar gelecek:
 Bu yapıda doğrulup
 Ayak açar gelecek.

1967
 Şamalı Rasathanesi.

II. The Telescope

*Mysteries in the sky,
Mysteries of our earth,
Mysteries through the universe -
How many wonders have you disclosed!
Your eye is fixed upon the heavens*

*It penetrates
Far beyond all reason!
Caught up by the love of man,
You led it out to interminable space -
To the very deepest,
The bottomless
void.*

*You were the ship that first sailed!
You stand between Man and the Universe.
Logic and Hypothesis,
The Known and the Unknown.
The Unfathomed is your course and port of call.
Boundlessness is your golden crown,
And infinity your nearest pole.
Immensity - your starting point.*

1967

Translated by Tom Botting

II. Teleskop

*Gökte sır,
Yerde sır,
Kainatta sır,
Ne kadar sihirli sır açtın yere.
Göklere dikilen gözün işliyor¹
Akıl işlemeyen derinliklere.*

*İnsanın aşkını
Tutuşup sen de
Sonsuz boşluklara yetiren oldun,
En derin,
En dipsiz boşluk içinde
Yüzten en birinci gemi sen oldun.*

*İnsanla kainat,
Mantıkla tahmin,
Malumla meçhuller arasındasın.
Derinlik amacın, menzilin, yolun.
Enginlik başında zerli taç oldu.
Sonsuzluk en iyi hattın, hududun,
Uzaklık seninçin başlangıç oldu.*

1967

1: Çok uzakları görüyor.

III. Astronomer and Poet

An astronomer are you,
 another - I!
 You have your telescope,
 I my pen.
 Both can scan the sky.
 Both seek...
 And we seek - two men.
 You a new star born
 And I a new world...
 So we meet the dawn.
 In seeking we rise to new
 heights,
 Searching our confines
 For new sights.
 With success at times,
 But new stars,
 And new rhymes,
 Willingly their secrets never
 revealed.
 Man sought
 For thousands of years
 What they concealed.
 Full of enigmas, the sky is a book
 Where for the infinite and boundless
 We must look.
 Deep, deeper we must sound

The wide unfathomable depths,
 Mysteries' bed profound...
 Beginning with the cipher unity - one,
 You rise, your flight from earth begun,
 And glide along with dreams enjoyed,
 Penetrating deeper probabilities' vast void.
 When the heart soars - and halts there can be
 none-
 A thousand problems rise that the mind must
 avoid,
 Then, brother, you, like me and everyone,
 Become a poet to write of dreams uncloyed.
 New is my dream! New is the sorrow that time has
 spun!
 You work in the heavens. On earth I am employed,
 Let your telescope scan and my pen run,
 Probing deepness unalloyed.
 Let the needless universe before us be deployed,
 For, brother, when life's course is done
 It is best to merge with the void.
 The sky displays its ravel, still to be undone,
 Infinity and boundlessness swim into view.
 So down ever deeper! Deep down, undestroyed
 Lies all that is new

1967

Translated by Tom Botting

III. Münecim Şair

(Rasathanenin bilim adamı Teymur Eminzade'ye)

Sen de münecimsin, ben de müneccim
 Senin teleskopun, benim kalemim.
 Arıyor,
 Arıyor...
 Arıyoruz biz,
 Sen yeni bir yıldız,
 Ben yeni bir söz...
 Böylece ağırar gecelerimiz.
 Araya araya yüceliriz biz.
 Tahminli tahminsiz bu aramalar
 Bazen uğurludur, bazen uğursuz...
 Yeni yol,
 Yeni söz,
 Yeni bir yıldız
 Sırrını vermiyor bazen yüzüyle.
 Bin bin yıllardır ki,
 İnsan sır ile
 Savaşır..
 Her zaman gider yarışlar,
 Bitip tükenmiyor bu ahtarışlar¹
 Sırlı kitap gibi bakmışız göğe.
 Biliriz
 Sonsuzluk, enginlik nedir.
 Daim derinliğe,
 En derinliğe.
 Yenilik her zaman derinliktedir.

Başlayıp tanınmış rakamdan:
 Kalkarsın.
 Ayığın üzüdür² yerden.
 Yüzersin koynunda hoş hayallerin
 Boşluğa direnen ihtimallerin...

Menzilsiz yollarda yürürken yürek
 Kendin de cevapsız bir sır olursun.
 Kardeş, bu noktada sen de benim tek
 Hayaller koynunda şair olursun.

Yenilik arzumdur, intizar gamım
 Sen göklere yücel,
 Ben inim yere
 Senin teleskopun,
 Benim kalemim
 İşlesin her zaman derinliklere.

Açılın önünde sonsuz kâinat
 Batsan da kardeşim, derinlikte bat.
 Dayazda³ batanlar korkudan ölür.
 Derinde batanlar kahraman olur.

Sırlı kitap gibi bakmışız göğe;
 Biliriz sonsuzluk, enginlik nedir.
 Daim derinliğe,
 En derinliğe.
 Yenilik her zaman derinliktedir.

1967

Tiny Window

The house where the great Scottish poet Robert Burns was born and lived has a tiny window. In those days, the owner of a house paid real estate taxes in proportion to the size of the windows.

*Hard to tell good and evil apart.
Taxes were levied on sunlight:
So people kept their windows small,
Huts and cottages were shorn of light.*

*In all ages, rights were usurped:
Justice was the name of dark oppression.
Sunlight was declared too cheap:
That, too, was owned by someone.*

*Ever since sunbeams fell on heads,
Humans suffered for the sake of laws.
The tax imposed on sunlight
Was squandered on darkest ignorance.*

*The fate of the port with a glittering heart
Turned dark like his home...
The poet always fell captive
When he yearned for freedom.*

*He looked at the world out of a tiny window:
Fullness vanished, things were torn asunder.
He gazed at the sky and the moon:
Earth and sky appeared inside the tiny frame.
His hopes and desires were gone -
Within the frame, his longings were undone.*

*All he had in his heart turned to gunpowder.
What is the measure of fire -
Rock or weight?
He feels,
Sees, burns
Just so
He can have a heart, not stone, in his chest.*

*Time's hand dealt him such blows -
Yet, he didn't turn his face away from the world.
He turned his suffering into songs:
"Let my heart carry the burden of the world's woes."*

*Desires always tear darkness apart,
Sending greetings to the days to come.
So long as the eyes see,
What difference does it make
If the window is big or tiny?*

1978

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

Küçük Pencere

Büyük İskoçya şairi R. Bern'in doğduğu ve yaşadığı evin çok küçük bir penceresi var. Çünkü o zaman pencere ne kadar çok ve büyük olurdusa, ev sahibi bir o kadar çok vergi vermeliydi.

*Ayırmak çetinmiş hayırdan şeri,
Güneş ışığına vergi konuldu.
Adamlar küçüttü pencereleri,
Küçük kulübeler ışıksız oldu.*

*Her zaman insanın hakkı yeyilmiş
Adalet denilmiş zulmete, zulme
Güneşin ışığı müfte¹ denilmiş,
Onun da sahibi var imiş, meğer.*

*Güneşin ışığı başlara seri,
İnsan ne etmedi kanundak yana.
Güneş ışığına alınan vergi
Harcandı cehalet karanlığına.*

*Kalbi ışık ile dolan şairin,
Kismeti, evdeki bir zulmet oldu.
Arzusu, kurtuluş olan şairin,
Kazancı, her zaman esaret oldu.*

1: Bedava, cabadan

*Küçük penecereden baktı dünyaya,
Bütünlük² yok oldu, bölündü herşey.
O baktı güneşe, o baktı aya,
Çerçeve içinde göründü yer gök.
Ümidi, arzusu kaldı yarıda,
Düşdü çerçeveye arzuları da.*

*Baruta çevrildi yüreğindeki,
Ateşe ne ölçü,
Ne taş, ne çeki?
Duyacak,
Görecek, yanacak,
Teki,
Sinede taş değil, bir yürek olsun.*

*Zamanın elinden ne gamler yedi,
Yine de dünyadan yüzü dönmedi.
Derdini şarkıya çevirip dedi:
Dünyanın dertleri kalbe yük olsun.*

*Arzular her zaman zulmeti yarmış,
Gelecek günlere selam aparmış.
Göz görürse eğer...
Ne farkı varmış,
Pencere ya küçük ya büyük olsun.*

1978

2: Bütünlük

Two Blindmen

*There's a blindman I know: His eyes are sightless,
But he is not blind.
Though he sometimes gets scorched in the fire of sorrows,
He does not turn a cold shoulder to his passion and his mind.
He reads and writes day and night,
In his mind's eye he sees, feels, knows.*

*But... There is someone else... Although he is not blind,
He cannot see, nonetheless.
His bosom friend might get killed before his very eyes,
"I saw nothing," he says.
He claims whatever is good as his, but fails to see the bad;
Looks at the clock, but can't tell what time it is.
Nothing noble visits the thoughts and feelings of his;
Often he denies he saw something though he really had.*

*A man is hardly blind if his eyes have no sight;
Blind is he who does not want to see.
To such an ignorant troglodyte,
Life itself is a grave, if you ask me.*

1968

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

İki Kör

*Bir kör tanıyorum, gözü körse de
Kendisi kör değil.
Bazen gam odunda kavrulursa da
Aklına, hissine o, nankör değil.
Geceli gündüzlü yazır, okuyor,
Aklının gözüyle görüp duruyor.*

*Fakat... Biri de var... Kör değilse de,
Gözü görmüyor.
Dostu göz önünde öldürülse de
Görmedim diyor.
İyiye ortaktır, yamanı görmez,
Fikrini, hissini yüceden demez,
Bazen gördüğünü görmek istemez.*

*Gözleri görmeyen kör değil hele,
Görmek istemeyen kördür, diyordim,
Böyle akılsıza, böyle cahile
Hayat kendisi de kördür diyordim.*

1968

Pauses

*You spoke,
I listened.*

*So impressive:
The long silences
Were more expressive
between words, sentences...*

*Stop,
Pause:
So many ideas are contained in each pause.
You spoke so,
I saw at one point
Silence in the light, words on the shadow.
Into these end-of-sentence intervals could go
The entire lexicon of a language.*

1979

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

Aralar

*Konuştun,
Dinledim.
Ne yaman oldu,
Sözlerden daha çok konuşan oldu
Kelimeler, cümleler arasındaki uzun sükülâr...*

*Dur,
Dur!
Her sükûta nice fikir var.
Öyle konuştun ki, gördüm bir ara
Sükûtu ışıktâ, sözü gölgede.
Cümle sonundaki bu aralara
Bir dilin lügatı sığır, belki de.*

1979

Latin

Latin language carries in every word
 meaning as big as the world
 The nation is dead but the language lives on
 No one calls "mother," "Earth," and "homeland"
 in that language anymore.
 Despite that the language lives on
 In the morning from one end of the world
 to the other
 Latin language still runs
 It may reach even to the constellations.

This language, like a soldier
 who died after gaining victory
 It owns no land or nation but
 it still lives
 The foundation of the sciences
 The first and the last word in the universe
 Who calls this language dead?

It is the language of doctors, the legendary
 and scholars
 By which months and the years are counted
 By which scholars writes the names of flowers, insects
 wind and the sky-
 in this dead language.
 Who calls this language dead?

it is not the language of the dead
 but that of life.
 On the shores of the Atlantic, a speaker ebullient and exulted

speaks in a foreign language
 Orator, tell me, what are we going to believe?
 The ears, the eyes, the actions or the words?

If you cannot say in your mother tongue
 "I am free, I am independent."
 Who would believe that you are?
 What kind of freedom is that, which cannot say its name?
 If your mother tongue is prisoner
 in small huts
 While in big meetings and conferences
 your language does not have one single word
 too weak to participate
 Like an orphan, not knowing
 his parent
 or very poor so the big ideas of
 The century cannot be expressed.

Look at the problem
 a homeland, a nation, exist without
 a language
 Be aware that you have a shining piano, like a mirror
 but it has no voice
 Tell me now
 which language should we call dead?
 The language which is prisoner in cramped poor huts
 which has a nation and a homeland
 Or the language which has come through centuries -
 its people dead
 but the language itself survives.

1967

Latin Dili

Latin dili!
 Her sözünde dünya boyda yük taşıtır,
 Latin dili!
 Millet ölüp, dil yaşayır.
 "Ana" deyən, "torpag" deyən, "veten" deyən
 yoh bu dilde.
 Ancag yene yaşar bu dil.
 Sabah¹ bizim arzumızın
 Serheddinden² o yana da
 goşar bu dil.
 Belke...bütün ulduzları³
 gezer bu dil.
 Döğüşlerde zafer çalıp
 Ölen ere benzer bu dil.
 Veteni yoh,
 Milleti yoh,
 Yaşar özü.
 İlmelerin temelidir
 Evvel sözü, âhir⁴ sözü.
 Kim deyir ki, ölüdür bu?
 Hekimlerin,
 Âlimlerin,
 Lokmanların dilidir bu.
 Bu dil ile hesaplanır ay da il⁵ de.
 Çiçeklerin;
 Böceklerin,
 Küleklerin⁶,

1: Yarın. 2: Hududundan, sınırından. 3: Yıldız. 4: Son. 5: Yıl, Sene. 6: Rüzgârların.

Feleklerin
 Adlarını yazır âlim:
 Ölü dilde.
 Kim deyir ki ölüdür bu?
 Ölülerin dili değil,
 Dirilerin dilidir bu.
 Atlantika sahilinde
 Coşa coşa
 Daşa daşa:
 — Men azadam⁷, men hoş-behtëm⁸,
 Deyir nâtig⁹ yad¹⁰ dilinde.
 Söyle natig
 İndi neye inanag biz:
 Gulaga mı,
 Ya göze mi?
 Emele mi,
 Ya söze mi?
 "Men azadam, müstâgilem" sözlerini
 Öz dilinde demeye de
 İhtiyarın yohsa eger,
 De kim sene azad deyir?..

Söyle nece azadsan ki,
 Kômalarda¹¹ dusdag¹² olup
 ana dilin.
 Böyük böyük meclislerden
 İtirilip¹³ ilim ilim¹⁴?...
 İclaslarda¹⁵, bir kelimesi, sözü yohdur.

7: Hürüm.
12: Esir.

8: Mıtluyum.
13: Yitirilmiş.

9: Halip.
14: İlim ilim itirmek.

10: Yabancı. 11: Kulübe/lerde.
15: Toplantılarda.

Belke... onun böyük, resmi meclislere
 Çıxmaq üçün üzü yohdur?
 Söyle, belke biç¹⁶ doğulup,
 Atasından¹⁷ yoh haberi?
 Belke bu dil çox kasıpdır¹⁸,
 Gucacağına sığışmayır
 Esrin böyük fikirləri?..

Sen derde bah,
 Veten de var,
 Millet de var.
 Ancag onun dili yohdur.
 Ele bil ki,
 Güzgü kimi, hamar,¹⁹ şəffaf royalın²⁰ var,
 dili yohdur...
 İndi söyle,
 Hansı²¹ dile ölü deyək.²²
 Veten varken,
 Millet varken,
 Kiçik, yohsul komalarda
 dusdag olan bir dile mi?
 Yohsa, uzun asırlardan
 keçip gelen
 Halgı ölen,
 Özü galan bir dile mi?

Kazablanka 1967

16: Piç. 17: Babasundan. 18: Yoksul. 19: Parlak. 20: Kuyruqlu piyanon.
 21: Hangi. 22: Diyelim

Black and Grey Hair

*My hair is turning swiftly gray.
My mother watches in dismay.
I beg you, mother, do not heave
A sigh for my sake! Do not grieve!*

*I burn the midnight oil. It's there
The flames within me singe my hair.
Think not that secretly I grieve.
I've cause for joy, I do believe.*

*Know life - and take death in your stride!
This grey hair, mother, is my pride.*

*My pitch-black locks were nature's gift.
What credit could I claim for this?
Its toil I prize above all else:
My grey hair I have earned myself.*

1957

Translated by Peter Tempest

Siyah Saçlar, Kır Saçlar

*Saçlarıma kır düşür, kır düşür, yaman düşür.
Her bakanda anamın yüreğine kan düşür.
Bu ak saçlar, ay ana, seni derde salmasın.
Saçımın kırlığından kanın hiç karalmasın.*

*Tutuşurum geceler masa arkasında ben.
Kırlaşır saçlarım da kalbimin ateşinden.
Sen deme ki, balamın¹ belki gizli gamı var,
Vaksiz ağaran saçın özge bir âlemi var.*

*Ölüm bile gam değil bu hayatı duyana,
Ben şu kır saçlarımla övünürüm ay ana!
Siyah, şeve² saçları tabiat vermiş bana.
İmrenmemek mümkün mü hiç böyle bir armağana?
Zahmeti hayatımın ilk bezeği sanmışım.
Kır saçları hayatta ben kendim kazanmışım.*

1957

1: evladımın, yavrumun. 2: koyu siyah renkli, kıymetli.

I Am Older Than My Grandfather

*My granddad died when he was eighty.
 My dad - when he was only sixty.
 But I am older
 In my forties
 Than both my dad
 And granddad.
 Telephones
 Telegraphs
 Radio
 Newspapers
 They load the days and load the months
 And every hour
 and every minute...
 Condense the world, whose day is to the
 right.
 And to the left - the night -
 Into one tiny room,
 With Spring in your head, and Winter - at your
 feet...
 Continents, poles
 Are united by my speed.
 In the heat and the flame
 Of this audacity.
 My love
 And my very nature*

*Have changed...
 The greater the speed,
 The shorter the distance.
 Yesterday borrows minutes from
 today
 And today -
 From tomorrow.
 The days are all mixed up,
 And so are the months,
 We have lost months,
 economizing years.
 In a single month I live as much
 As my granddad did in a single year.
 I'm a river flowing down a mountain.
 Skirting the mountain peak,
 A stream muddy in the mountains*

*And a clear river in the valley -
 A river with hundreds of different moods.
 I'm older than my father,
 I'm older than my grandfather.*

1965

Translated by Louis Zelikoff

Babamdan Kocayım Ben

Babam¹ öldü sekseninde
 Atamsa² altmışında.
 Hem babamdan,
 Hem atamdan
 kocayım
 Kendimse kırk yaşında.
 Telefonlar,
 Telgraflar,
 Radyolar,
 Gazeteler
 Yüklendirir³ günün, ayın yüküyle,
 Her saati, her anı...
 Bir odaya yerleştirir
 Sağı gündüz, solu gece
 Başı bahar, ayağı kış dünyayı...
 Kitaları,
 Kutupları
 Birleştirir süratim.
 Bu süratin
 Bu cüretin,⁴

1: Büyük babam. 2: Babam. 3: Baş gösteren olaylarla kafamızı yüküyor, yoruyor.
 4: Casaretin.

Alevinde, odunda
 Değişiptir
 Benim aşkım,
 Fitretim⁵...
 Sür'atimiz çoğaldıkça
 Mesafeler kısalır.
 Ve dünüm bugünümden,
 Bugünümse sabahımdan
 Dakikalar borç alır,
 Günler güne,
 Aylar aya karışıptır
 Yitirmişiz
 Ayların,
 Yılların sahilini.
 Ben bir ayda yaşıyorum
 Babamın bir yılını.
 Dağdan inip
 Dağ başına dolanan
 Buruldukça bulanana
 Bozkırlarda durulan
 Yüz hıslıtlı çayım ben.
 Atamdan kocayım ben,
 Babamdan kocayım ben.

1965

5: Fitratim, yaratılışım.

Aladdin's Lamp

*Through groves of sun-kissed persimmon
The Tigris flows serene.
I come from a distant land
To watch its grace supreme.*

*Its waves seem to whisper
A melancholy song,
A thousand voices echoing
As they roll and roll along.*

*A thousand starry buttons
the river's shining breast.
Tales from a Thousand and One Nights
The Tigris tells its guest.*

*Listen to the Tigris,
Its whispered serenade.
Breezes sweep its surface,
Like the sighs of Sheherezade!*

*The city of a thousand legends
Smiling in its dreams.
While from the shore Aladdin's lamp
Like a happy beacon gleams.*

*The light of Arab happiness
Is dawning on Baghdad.
On the shore of the mighty Tigris
Today all hearts are glad.*

*This lovely land attracted
For many hundred years.
The eyes of avid adventurers,
Who brought it grief and tears.*

*The merciless Magribli
Stole that lamp so bright;
For many generations
The Tigris saw no light.*

*Within their native country
The Arabs saw no peace.
The Arabs longed with all their hearts
That the reign of darkness cease.*

*They went to bed in darkness,
Their day in darkness started.
The lamp shone in a stranger's home,
With its age-old owner parted.*

*For long, long years the Arabs
Endured their heavy fate,*

*But even silty waters
Must settle, soon or late;*

*Awful is the river
Breaking through the dam.
The Arabs rose and drove out
John Bull and Uncle Sam.*

*They wrenched their priceless treasure
From vicious foreign hands.
Back in its native country
Aladdin's lamp now stands.
Happy are the people
On the Tigris shore.
No foreigner can steal the fruit
Of their labor any more.*

*With all my heart I join you
In your joy at being free.
O valiant Arab people,
Your land is dear to me.*

*May your children not feel a stranger
On the Tigris happy shore,
And may Aladdin's lamp
Stay there for ever more!*

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

Aladdinın Çırağı¹

*Decle akır aramla
Hurmalkılar içinden,
Onu seyre gelmişim
Uzak elden bu gün ben.
Hazin bir şarkı gibi
Pıçıldıyor² dalgalar
Dalgaların sesinde
Bin şiir, bin şarkı var.
Yıldızlardan döşüne
Düğme takıp her gece
Binbir Gece nağlını³
Çay⁴ konuşur gizlice.
Kulak ver, gör, ne diyor
Fısıldaşan dalgalar,
Dalgaların sesinde
Şhrizadın ahı var.
Efsaneler şehiri,
Efsaneler içinde
Sanki gülümsüyor,
Aladdinın çırağı
Sahilde yanıp söner.
Arabın baht çırağı
Yandı Bağdat elinde*

1: Lambası. 2: Fısıldıyor. 3: Masal. 4: Nehir.

Declenin sahilinde.
O, öz şafaklarıyla
Heris⁵ yadellilere⁶
Çok çekti gözü dağı
Yıllar geçti....Megribli⁷
Oğurladı⁸ çırağı.
Gerinelerden⁹ beri
Declenin sahilleri
Işık yüzöl görmedi
Rahat ömür sürmedi
Arap öz ülkesinde,
Gam titredi sesinde.
Arap zülmette yattı
Zülmette de oyandı.
Arapın öz çırağı,
Yadın¹⁰ evinde yandı.
Yandı yad ülkelerde,
Arap dözdü¹¹ bu derde.
Ancak bulaşık akan
Sular bir gün durulur,
Bendi dağılan selin

5: Açgöz.

9: Eski zamanlardan.

6: Düşman, başkası.

10: Düşman, başkası.

7: Batılı.

11: Katlandı.

8: Çalmak manasında.

Gazabı yaman olur.
Taştı Arapın kini,
Coştı Arapın kini;
Yadların pençesinden
Aldı itirdiğini¹².
Aladdin'in çırağı
Yandı doğma¹³ elinde
Declenin sahilinde-
Doğrudan¹⁴ bahtiyardır
Toprağının barını¹⁵
Özleri¹⁶ götürenler¹⁷
Öz elinin rencini¹⁸
Öz evinde görenler.
Alkış sana, hey Arap
Alkış dedim yüreğten!
Senin azadlığına
Mübarek diyorum ben!
Öz evinde kendini
Yavrun garip sanmasın;
Aladdin'in çırağı
Daha oğurlanmasın!¹⁹

12: Kaybettiğini.

17: Yararlananlar.

13: Öz.

18: Zahmet.

14: Gerçekten.

19: Çalınmasın.

15: Meyvesini.

16: Kendileri.

My Mother

*She is illiterate.
She cannot write her name -
my mother.*

*But she taught me how to count.
She taught me the names of the months and years,
and most importantly,
She taught me language -
my mother.*

*I tasted joy and
unhappiness
with this language.
And I created every poem
of mine
and every melody
with this language.*

*Without that
I am nobody.
I am a lie.
And the creator of my work,
in all its volumes and volumes,
is my mother*

1967

Menim Anam

*Savadsızdır¹,
Adını da yazabilirmir
Menim anam...
Ancag mene,
Say² öğredip,
Ay öğredip,
İl³ öğredip;
En vacibi:
Dil öğredip
Menim anam...
Bu dil ile tanımışam
Hem sevinci,
Hem de gami...
Bu dil ile yaratmışam
Her şi'rimi,
Her nağmemi.
Yoh men heçem,
Men yalanam,
Kitap-kitap sözlerimin
Müellifi: benim anam!..*

1968

1: Okumamıştır, okuma yazması yoktur. 2: Sayı. 3: Yıl.

In One Building We Were Born

*All are born without a name,
Names are given later on.
First there's one
And later on
A man gets dubbed with many names.*

*Ranks will come
with time...
Offspring have one name,
However many there may be -
That one name is
Baby.*

*His eyes are closed.
For him its all the same -
Be it day or night.
He has only one desire
and one word alone...
Just suppose
he wants to eat
or that he wants to drink,
Or, maybe, wants to sleep-
All that he can do
is cry...*

*Crying
Is his only means.
By their crying
Mothers know
What babies need,
And why they say.*

*Perhaps a cry was man's first word,
Primeval tongue,
And weeping first began
The alphabet of art,
sophistry,
and wisdom...*

*In one building we were born -
All the same in every way.
We were born,
but of that
We had no idea.
None could tell the difference
Between us by our height,
By our figures, or our faces...
That means we were all the same
And our name was -
baby.*

*Diapers were our only clothes.
Our only word - a cry.
Our only food was milk.
Things that came much later on,
I do not know who thought them up
Our names were changed,
Our clothes were changed,
Our faces were changed.
Yet are we not still the same?
Tell me, then, what are they -
All these later changes?*

1965

Translated by Tom Botting

Biz Bir Binada Doğduk

Herkes isimsiz doğur,
Sonradan isim konur.
Önce bir isim,
Sonra...
Onun kaç ismi,
Adı, soyu
Rütbesi olur...

Yalnız doğumevinde
Herkesin bir adı var,
Bütün doğulanları
"Bebek" adlandırırılar.

Kapalıdır gözleri,
Gecesi, gündüzü bir.
Arzusu bir
sözü bir...

Deyek¹,
Açtır,
Susuzdur,
Yahut da uykusuzdur,
Ağlayacak
O ancak...
Ağlamak, onun hele
Birce bu silahı var.
Ağlamakla bildirir
Arzusunu,
Sözünü
Annesine bebekler.

1: Oyle sanalım ki, zannedelim ki.

Ağlamak ilk dilidir
Belki beşeriyetin?...
Ağlamaktan başlayıp
Alfabesi sanatın,
Felsefenin,
Hikmetin...

Biz bir binada doğduk,
Biz her işte bir olduk.
Doğduk...
Fakat biz bunu
O sırada bilmedik,
Boydan
Sıfattan bile,
O kadar seçilmedik;
Beraber olduk demek
İlk ismimiz bir:
Bebek.

İlk elbisemiz kundak.
İlk sözüümüz ağlamak.
İlk gıdamız süt oldu.
Son isimler bilemem
Nereden uyduruldu?...
Adlarımız değişti
Elbisemiz değişti,
Yemegimiz değişti,
Dilimiz de değişti.
Her işimiz bir iken
Ya sonradan yaranan
Bu ayrılık ne işti?

1965

The Merry-Go-Round

*The merry-go-round like a wheel is turning,
Like our planet through Space so endlessly whirling;
Behind one another, on elephant steed,
The children ride gaily, with gathering speed.*

*On the merry-go-round happy moments fly fast,
The little ones loudly clap hands in their mirth.
They think their not turning around in the least,
That around them is spinning the east.*

*So children rejoice, laugh merrily, play -
With the merry-go-round,
Time changes too.
'Tis not you who are spinning round this world today,
But the world which is spinning round you.*

*Then children be merry, for life is but brief;
'Twill pet and caress you while you are still young.
While you are yet children, the world will forgive,
Though you be capricious and sharp be your tongue.*

*Oh, the merry-go-round!... A bevy of cranes
Soaring, wheels into line high above in the skies;*

*And mothers and fathers look on and rejoice
In the happiness beaming from their childrens' eyes.*

*A lone urchin stares from afar on their fun,
His eyes are wide open, he's sucking his thumb.
Round and round ride the children...
He looks on in glee,
...But he will change,
Now can't keep his eyes from the huge wonder wheel.
And his head spins with visions of wishes come
true.*

*The urchin looks on and he happily sighs.
"How lovely to ride round like this," say his eyes.
He's here on his own, though, and none can be
found
To give him a ride on this merry-go-round.*

*But he - he is happy...
I cannot but wonder
At his big little heart...
O my soul,
Look and wonder!
For he can find pleasure just at the sight
Of somebody else's delight.*

Translated by Louis Zellikoff

Karusel (Atlı Karınca)

Dönüyor karusel bir teker gibi.
Daima dolanan, dönen yer gibi.
Dönüyor çocuklar destebeste¹,
Biri "at" belinde, biri "fil" üstü.

Karusel dönüyor... Geçer hoş anlar.
Çocuklar el çalır şadlıklarından.
Çocuklar zanneder, durmuşlar onlar,
Fakat başlarına dönüyor cihan.

Sevinin, çocuklar, gülün, eğlenin,
Karusel dolanır,
Değişir zaman.
Helelik² cihanın başına siz yok,
Sizin başınıza dolanır cihan.

Sevinin, çocuklar, ömür gödektir³,
Hayat sıvazlıyor, okşuyor sizi.
Helelik dünya da götürecektir.
Sizin nazınızı, kaprisinizi.

Karusel dönüyor... Bir katar turna
Sanki halka olup safa dizilir.
Babalar, anneler çocuklarının
Bakıp sevincine sevinir, gülür.

Bütün bu şenlikten uzakta ancak
Parmağı ağzında durup bir çocuk.
Çocuklar dönüyor... bakır onlara
O gülür...
Onun da değişir hali.
Uzaktan baktıkça o, dönenlere
Dönüyor onun da fikri, hayali.

O da hoşnut olur, zevk alır genden⁴.
Anlıyor dönmenin hoş olduğunu,
Eğlence yerine tek geldiğinden
Yoktur karusele bindiren onu.

Fakat o, mutludur...
O kalbe ben de
Hayranım...
Ey gönül, düşün,
düşün sen,
O zevk alabilir özgesinin de
Hazzından, zevkinden, saadetinden !...

1965

1: Did dizi, bölük bölük. 2: Şimdilik. 3: Kısadır.

4: Uzaktan

If You Expect Respect From The World

*If you expect respect from the world
and wish for joy,
Examine your own heart,
Suffocate the darkness there
and kill the hatred,
If you desire laughter,
Give happiness to someone else,
If you make another smile surely the gift is yours as well.*

*Do you know why roses smile?
In order to bring other hearts joy.*

1980

Dünyadan Eger Saygı Umarsın

*Dünyadan eger saygı umup, neşe dilersin,
Öz kalbine bak,
zulmeti boğ,
nefreti öldür.*

*Güldürsen eğer başkasını, sen de gülersin,
Gülmek dileğindir eğer özgeyi güldür.
Bildin mi, niçin öyle gülür bahçede güller?
Gül, güldü ki, gülsün onu gördükte gönüller.*

1980

Fear

*In my left hand there is an old wound -
a gift from my childhood,
Unaware that wood burns,
I seared my hand in a brazier.
I was warned by the sound of singeing flesh,
but I wasn't afraid,
I felt fear only when I burned my hand.*

*The real experience of life began with that fire.
Colorful flames from the embers caressed my childish eyes.
I don't know why everything I've touched since birth
has burned me.
I wasn't afraid until I was burned.
I didn't know fear until I left my childish ways.
Since I was burned, I am careful playing with fire,
and so life begins, so is the habit.*

1966

Korku

*Benim sol elimde yanık yeri var,
Bana armağandır çocukluğumdan.
Odun yankısından habersiz anlar,
Elimi mangalda yakmışım yaman.
Bana "cız" -dediler,
fakat korkmadım.
Elimi yakırken tanıdım odu¹.
Benim hayatla ilk tanışıklığım,
Elimi yandıran
Oddan başladı...*

*Okşadı gözümü hâlâ çocukken,
Ocağın rengarenk alevi, közü.
Dünyaya geleti, bilmem ki, neden
Neye tutulduksa, o, yaktı bizi...*

*Ben oddan korkmadım yanana kadar;
Ben korku bilmedim kanana kadar².
Öyle ki, yandım,
Odlu oynamaktan korktum, sakındım.
Başladı itiyat,
başladı hayat!..*

1966

1: Ateş. 2: Burada büyüyüp, çocukluğumla vedalaşana kadar. kanmak: anlamak.

Standing Before the Pyramids

*From morning until the evening
standing before the pyramids,
"Five cents!" he calls,
An Arab boy begs,
In his own land, but using the language of foreigners.*

*I look at this strange time,
with burning heart,
What a time, what a day, you are in.
Looking at the land of the Arabs,
Keeping my head as high as the pyramids.*

*But the Arab lives in fear in his own land,
like an idiot boy.
O my brother, instead of begging,
remember your past,
And feel shame for the pyramids,
that your fathers built.*

*You take money from foreigners,
like taking alms,
Standing before the pyramids
that your fathers built,
Study your own shame."*

1959

Ehramların Önünde

*Ehramların önünde, gündüzler akşama dek,
"Fünf piastır"¹ diyerek,
Öz² doğmaca elinde
Dilenir Arap oğlu ecnebinin³ dilinde.
Zamana bak, zamana.
İçimden yana yana
Bakarım,
Ey koca Şark, ne gündesin, ne günde.
Arabın vatanında
Başını yüce tutup ecnebi ehram gibi;
Arap gezmeye korkar öz yurdunda, ham⁴ gibi.
Kardeşim, dilenende, geçmişini ansana,
Dedenin yücelttiği ehramdan utansana.
Öz helalca paranı ecnebiden bu günde
Sen sadaka alırsın.
Dedenin yücelttiği ihramların önünde
Bak nasıl alçalırsın.*

1959

1: Beş piastır Almanca para birimidir.
4: Budala, vurdumduymaz.

2: Kendi. 3: Yabancıdır.

Quatrains

*Those who do not honor their roots and ancestors,
drink water from a dry fountain,
not from the spring.
In this world, no animal but an ass
Walks in front of his grandfather on the road.*

*We became those who built walls from a distance,
We became those who never feel nor see the future,
We became those who worship the powerful,
We became those who revile the fallen.*

*You said morning is mine,
Today, if you realize morning is not just cash,
Yours eyes fixed upon the wealth of others,
If everything is for you, for whom are you?*

*When the seeds fall in a mother's womb,
A road is opened from nothingness to life,
When you are born,
Travel begins from life to nothingness.*

*You are my essence and I am yours,
Apparently there are no boundaries between us,
We did not understand difference,
in this state of unity,
Between the mirror that reflects and the image reflected.*

Dörtlükler

*Kökünü, soyunu beğenmeyen kes
Akmazdan su içir, kaynaktan içmez.
Dünyada eşekten başka bir hayvan
Yolda dedesinden ileri geçmez.*

*Duvarı temelden çep¹ ören olduk.
Yarımı ne duyan, ne gören olduk.
Geleni çepikle² karşılayan biz
Gideni tepikle³ götüren olduk.*

*Sen benim özümün, ben senin özün
Yok imiş arada bir serhaddimiz.
Gösteren aynanın, görünen yüzün
Farkını görmedik bu vadede biz.*

*"Sabah da benimdir", dedin bugün sen.
Sabah nakit değil, eğer düşünsen.
Herkesin yanında gözün var, dayan⁴,
Herşey seninçinse, sen kim içinsin?*

*Öyle ki, düşünce ana betnine⁵,
Yokluktan varlığa bir yol tuşlanır⁶,
Dünyaya geldiğinde, dönüp tersine,
Varlıktan yokluğa sefer başlanır.*

1: Eğik. 2: El çırpma, alışla. 3: Tekme ile, tekme atmakla. 4: Dur.
5: Karnına, rahmine. 6: Yönelir



The Colorful Suitcase

(Alabazak Chamadan)

Bahtiyar Vahabzade

Trans. Shouleh Vatanabadi

I have a comic story for you, written in four parts. This story will make you laugh and cry at the same time.

The office president had been promoted to a higher position and the vice president was placed in charge of the former president's duties. In order to officially replace the president, the vice president knocked on every possible door, but to no avail. A new president was hired from the outside. From the first instant, the vice president did not get along with this new president, Husein Khalidovich. In a matter of days, with a retirement notice in his hand, the vice president found himself playing dominoes with the old men on the boulevard.



Now, the second part of our story starts. The employees were aware of the power of the young new president and that they could not "fool around" with him. Accordingly, all the relationships in the office changed as our story continues.

From this point on, "cringing" becomes the hero of our story. Now, my dear readers might wonder how it is possible for "cringing" to be a hero. Is it a human being? No, of course, it is not, but it is a characteristic that some semi-humans have, especially when they are around people in authority. This trait is the main character of my story. Starting from that day, five times a day or maybe six to seven times, Husein Khalidovich, the appointed president and all his relatives were greeted warmly and their health politely inquired after by workers in the office. Their birthdays were remembered. The president's coat was held for him. In short, the game of subservience was played for his benefit. The players of this game were basically three branch directors - for they all had their eyes set on the vacant vice presidency. Husein Khalidovich, however, had not yet made a decision for this appointment and was reviewing the suitability of each of the three candidates. Suitability, of course, is not to be mistaken for ability and talent. Ability and talent were only of secondary consideration. The main issue was which one of the directors would be able to serve him better. To figure this out, Husein Khalidovich needed time. The three branch directors were also aware of this. A competition of loyalty and service to the president started. They were each trying hard to be the winner, and of course Husein Khalidovich himself was the one who benefitted most.

The three directors - Karim, Rahim and Salim - each had different ways of proving useful to the president. Karim, for instance, was good at locating any medicine difficult to find in the city, since his father-in-law had an important position in a pharmaceutical office. Rahim, on the other hand, was good at finding rare imported goods for his boss, since his brother was one of the big businessmen in town. As for Salim... his talent was different... Salim was expert in learning the latest jokes in town and making his boss light-hearted every morning. So that is why the president could not make up his mind as to which of the directors he should offer the position.

In fact, among the three, the smartest and most active was Salim, but this was a source of concern for the president. For Salim's smartness was giving his boss a sour stomach. He was thinking that

if Salim became the vice president, later he would be greedy for the position of president. Karim was stubborn and pretentious, whereas Rahim was obedient, like a lamb, and could be taken advantage of easily. That's why the president was more inclined to offer Rahim the position.

One day the president called Rahim into his office. His brother-in law was ill. He took a prescription out of his pocket and gave it to Rahim.

"They have checked all the pharmacies and haven't been able to find this medicine, see what you can do..."

Rahim took a look at the prescription.

"Who is this prescription for? Is it for Rafik's father? Rafik and our Alik are in the same class. He is a very smart kid, he knows "Little Red Riding Hood" by heart."

"You should get the medicine to him by 11 o'clock today. Do you have their address."

"Yes of course I do... weren't we there at Rafik's birthday party."

"Hurry up then!"

Rahim left and the president called Karim to his office. Karim entered with a bow.

"Good morning Husein Khalidovich. I hope you are not angry..."

"Why?"

"Nothing, you just look a bit upset... your new suit looks very nice on you."

"It is not new. Haven't you seen me wearing it many times?"

"It looks new to me... it is very nice."

"I had it made in Moscow."

"It shows... it can't be the work of our tailors. It fits you perfectly. By the way, I was there yesterday."

"Where?"

"There... at our relative's."

"Which relative?"

"I mean Chapgoz."

"That big shot?"

"Yes."

"Is he your relative?"

"Haven't I told you before?"

"This is the first time you have talked about him."

"You are right... I wanted to tell you before, but I was shy about it."

"Really? You are shy when you're not supposed to be. Now tell me, how are you related to him?"

"On my wife's side."

"Are you pulling my leg?"

"No, I am serious."

"Karim, you know he is a very useful connection."

"Of course... and I told him a lot of good things about you yesterday."

"Like what?"

"Whatever I was supposed to tell."

"You probably have told him that I am not offering you the position of vice presidency."

"No... not on my life! I told him that we have never had a person like you in our office."

"OK. We will talk about this some other time. Do you think you can find a couple of French perfumes for me?"

"Why not?"

"Go, get them then!"

As soon as Karim left, Husein Khalidovich started thinking, "What if he was right about his relative... that can ruin everything for me... but he could be lying? How can I find out about this?"

At this time, Naza Khanim¹ entered bringing him tea coquettishly. She had been working at this office long enough to know everything about everybody. The boss asked her,

"Naza Khanim, do you know this Karim well?"

"Karim, the branch director?"

"Yes."

"I know him very well. You know him well too."

"I don't mean it that way... does he really have a relative among the authorities?"

Naza Khanim thought awhile and said, "I can't tell you much about that. But I know he has a big mouth, if he had a connection up there, he would have let everyone know about it much earlier."

1: Mrs.

"OK... go now but this should remain between us."

About half an hour after the two branch directors had been called to the president's office, Salim, who was very upset since he had not been called, took documents that had to be signed by the president and went to Husein Khalidovich's office. At the door he said,

"Hello to my favorite boss. Can I come in?"

"You are already in."

"Well, how can I fly in the face of etiquette before such a good boss?"

"Yes, I see you always observing etiquette. Well, tell me what you want."

Salim put the documents to be signed on the president's desk.

"Your honorable signature please."

Husein Khalidovich signed the papers and stood up, "I want to ask you something. If you tell me the truth, I will tell you something that will make you happy." Salim's heart started beating fast. He thought to himself that the director was making a reference to the vacant position.

"First of all, I have never lied about anything to you. There is only one liar in this office and he is..."

"Well, tell me if Karim is related to the big shot Chapgoz."

Salim burst out into laughter.

"This is his latest lie. How could he be connected to him? Chapgoz and Karim's first wife are from the same town, that's all."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

The president was silent for a while.

"Well, tell me, how is your work going?"

"I am holding on to you and will go wherever you take me."

Husein Khalidovich of course knew what Salim was referring to, but disregarded this.

"Be clear, what do you mean?"

"How about a funny joke?"

The boss sat down and said

"Let's hear it."

"One day a camel was lying down, basking in the sun. The fox

thought the camel was dead, but just to make sure, kicked the camel, the camel didn't move. Being sure the camel was dead, the fox thought to himself, this is great, I will take the camel to my den and eat him little by little all winter long. He then tied his tail to the camel's tail and started dragging him. At this time the camel opened his eyes and stood up. The fox, who was tied up to the camel's tail was hanging face down. As the camel moved, the fox kept banging into the camel's sides. The crow who was watching the scene, asked the fox, "What is this miserable condition you are in?" Not to lose face, the fox answered. "He is a big guy, I am holding on to him and will go where ever he takes me."

Husein Khalidovich laughed so hard that tears ran down his cheeks. "OK, go. That's enough for today."

But, Husein Khalidovich, you promised to make me happy.

"But you did make me happy with your joke. Isn't that enough to make you happy?"

Salim did not have any answer to that.

A few days later, early in the morning, the secretary of the office called the branch directors and informed them that the night before, the boss's brother-in-law had passed away and Husein Khalidovich was now expecting them for the mourning ceremony. Rahim looked at Karim, Karim looked at Salim, and they all wondered what they should do now. All of the sudden Karim covered his face with his hands, and crying, he left the room. Following him, Rahim took out his handkerchief and pretended to be wiping his tears, "He left four orphaned kids, said Rahim, and left the room."

The secretary was astonished by this scene and looked at Salim as if she wanted to tell him, "What about you? How come you are not crying on such a day?" Salim knew well that Naza Khanim was very close to Husein Khalidovich and that she reported whatever happened in the office to him. He was certain she would report the reaction of the branch directors to the boss as well. Salim knew that his rivals thought no matter how brilliant a show he put on, it would not be as effective as the other ones. "I will leave my performance for the boss himself," he thought, and looked at Naza Khanim. "He is dead now. I am more concerned about the boss who is now

responsible for the family of the deceased."

The secretary went on, "The stupid guys! It is as if their father is dead," and started laughing at the behavior of the two branch directors.

In twenty minutes the branch directors were at the brother-in-law's house. As soon as they entered, Rahim and Karim embraced Husein Khalidovich without giving Salim any chance.

"What is this catastrophe that has happened to us?" they said, while crying.

Salim thought, "They got ahead of me here too, I am left behind..."

To out smart them, he had to put on a very impressive show. All of the sudden, he stepped backwards and banged his head on the door frame in such a way that the door shook. By this act he attracted everyone's attention. He was about to repeat this, when the boss's wife Gulia Khanim stopped him.

"Salim, brother, don't."

Salim turned to Gulia Khanim: "Your suffering is my suffering," and banged his head on the door again, this time so hard that a bump as large as a walnut came out on his forehead. Tears were flowing from his eyes. Gulia Khanim wiped Salim's tears with her shawl; she was impressed by this friend's sincerity. Karim and Rahim, however, were cursing Salim in their hearts and were envious of his ability to put on such an act. They knew that they were losing the game. This brings us to the third act of our story and its climax.

Later on, the boss took his loyal servants, the branch directors, to the other room to consult with them.

"One should not kill himself for the death of someone else. Now, let's think what we should do regarding this tragedy. The problem is that my sister-in-law and Gulia Khanim don't want to bury the dead in the new graveyard. That graveyard is shallow and near the sea. Tell me now, do you think we can find a grave in the old graveyard?"

The branch directors looked at each other.

"Which one of you has a connection at the burial office?"

After a while Rahim opened his mouth and said, "You are absolutely

right Husein Khalidovich. Although the new graveyard is very close to the water, I can't find a grave there on the hill top. I buried my brother there last year."

"I told you we don't want to bury him in that graveyard."

Now Karim opened his mouth, "Now-a-days a lot of people bury their dead in nearby villages like Saray or even Mardakan."

The boss responded angrily,

"Ashi?... what are you talking about? There are ceremonies to be observed on the seventh day of death, and on the fortieth day, and the anniversary. Who is going to drive all the way to Mardakan on all these occasions?"

Salim, who had been silent until now, jumped into the conversation, "Husein Khalidovich, you don't need to worry, I will take care of this for you."

The boss responded in disbelief, "Salim, this is a serious matter, tell me how?"

"Don't ask me how, just tell me what time is it now?"

"Ten o'clock sharp."

"By 4 o'clock the grave will be ready at the new graveyard."

The boss embraced Salim and kissed him.

"Now we are talking, hurry up then!"

Karim and Rahim, who had been defeated, went into the yard to set up the tent for the mourning ceremonies.

Salim sat in his car and went straight to his house. He took five sets of fine imported tiles left from last year's renovation of his house and set them aside. His wife, who was watching him all this time, said,

"I hope it is for a good cause. Where are you taking these?" She snapped at him.

Salim told his wife that the boss's brother-in-law was dead and he was taking the tiles to fence the grave.

His wife lost her temper, "Why didn't you ever use these to fence your father's grave?"

"You are talking too much, this is my business."

The woman understood from 'my business' what her husband had in mind, and did not ask anything else.

2: Hey man!

"You think this will help?" And she continued, "But I don't believe it, your boss is a fox."

Salim knew she was right and he remembered the story he had told his boss a week ago about the fox and the camel and smiled. How could his wife know that the real fox was standing right in front of her and had already confessed to the camel that he was a fox? Salim, however, didn't say anything about that story to his wife and bragged, "I am doing him a favor. Let's see how he will return it."

"Wishful thinking."

Although what the wife said worried Salim, he changed the subject, "I had this suitcase, the one I liked a lot... dated back to Nova's time...that colorful one..."

"The one you brought from the village?"

"Yes... where is it?"

"I wanted to throw it out several times, but you never let me do that. There, it is, in the basement."

"Will you bring it for me?"

Salim responded angrily, "Ashi, I wouldn't have asked for it if I didn't need it."

The wife found the suitcase in storage and brought it. Salim opened the dusty suitcase. The musty smell filled his nose. He took the old letter his father had written to him, his school notes and other things out of the suitcase and put them aside. He was about to say, "Throw them out" to his wife, but changed his mind. "Put them somewhere in the basement," he said.

He then put the tiles in the suitcase and went straight to the graveyard. He found Ghulam Dayi³, the grave digger. Over the past three years, every time he came to visit his father's grave, Salim would say hello to this man who had buried his father.

He was a strange man this Ghulam Dayi, in his late seventies, he was still very lively. He had experienced the up and downs of life. He didn't like to mingle with people so much, but instead spent his time with plants and flowers. One could always find him in the graveyard among the graves, planting flowers or watering the trees. He had turned the old graveyard into a garden.

3: Uncle.

He was known by a lot of people in the town. After all, death was a fact of life in every household. Ghulam had spent much of his life in this borderland between life and death.

Coming back home from his work, Ghulam Dayi would never say to this family, "Today I buried this many people," instead he would say, "Today the star of these people extinguished." Salim knew well that Ghulam Dayi was not a greedy person. So he had to be very tactful in the way he was going to broach the subject with him. Two months ago, when one of Salim's relatives had died, he had come to Ghulam Dayi to offer him a bribe for an empty grave. Ghulam Dayi had scolded him in return. So, Salim knew he could not persuade Ghulam with bribes.

Salim brought Ghulam over to his father's grave and opened the subject,

"Ghulam Dayi, you know that before his death my father had asked me to bury him in the village next to his mother. I couldn't fulfil his wish then and buried him here."

Ghulam Dayi interrupted him,

"You have been an undutiful son..."

Salim continued,

"You are right... but that is over now. Listen, it's been a month now that every night my father appears in my dream scolding me. He says to me, You have done what you shouldn't have. At least take my bones to the village and bury me there, or else I will never forgive you."

Ghulam Dayi was moved by Salim's words.

"Open my father's grave," Salim continues, "and put my father's bones in the car trunk." He then opened the car trunk and took out the colorful suitcase.

"Put the bones in here. I will take them to the village tomorrow."

Ghulam listened to him carefully and shook his head, "Son, don't you know that you are not supposed to take the dead out of the grave. This is a sin. Good human beings do not disturb the dead. The dead soul will never rest in peace. Haven't you heard that?"

"Yes, I have, but this is a belief belonging to the past..."

"No, my son, a real human being knows what is good at any time." "Don't say that to me, this is my father's own wish... please save me from these nightmares..."

Ghulam appeared to be convinced,

"It is your father. You know better. I hope I won't be held responsible for this sin before God." He lit a cigarette and continued, "But I will do this under two conditions, one is that you should have a complete burial ceremony for him again in the village according to customs. If you don't, may you be cursed."

"Of course I will, Ghulam Dayi. What is the second condition?"

"I will tell you the second condition after I put the bones in this suitcase."

"That's fine."

Ghulam Dayi started opening the grave. His pick ax was at work, while Salim was deep in thought as to what he should do next. Was he really going to take the bones to the village? If he did that, as Ghulam had asked, he had to go through the burial ceremony again. What else could he do? Burying his father in the new graveyard would not be so easy either, he needed a death certificate to do that. What was he supposed to do then? For now, he decided not to worry about this and to find a solution later. For the time being, he had to finish the job he started. He had to make sure everything went well. As for his father, he could always ask his cousin in the village to help him. His cousin, he thought, was very clever and would understand his position and take care of everything. Salim noticed that the grave was open and that Ghulam was putting the bones in a plastic bag while murmuring something. All of a sudden, he noticed his father's head and immediately turned his face away, he couldn't bear looking at his father. His father's image appeared right in front of his eyes. Salim tried hard to get rid of this image but he couldn't. He remembered his father's face whenever he was angry.

Salim was ten years old when he lost his mother. His father was the head of the village council. He, therefore, was so busy with his work that he would not see his only son for days. Salim grew up on his own, doing whatever he wished.

He was taking his last exam of the last grade in school. He had plans to move to Baku and enter one of the universities. His math teacher Ashraf Muallim⁴ had not given him a better grade than 'three.' Ashraf Muallim was one of the most respected teachers in the village. He would work extra hours with those students who needed more help, making sure they learned the subject. He would always be of help to those students who wanted to go on to higher education. He would invite them to his house, give them advice, and guide them. Although from the beginning of the school year, Salim was among those who were invited to the teacher's house, he had ignored the invitations. The teacher had even talked to Salim's father about this, but to no avail. Once when the teacher had given him the grade three, Salim had been very rude to him. Hearing of this event, the father had gone to the teacher's house to apologize on his son's behalf and the next day, he had thrown his son out of the house. Salim had stayed in his uncle's house that summer and, at the end of July, his father had been informed about Salim's moving to Baku.

His father had come to see him at the bus station and had handed him the very suitcase. "There are things in this that you might need and they will last at least until you are done with the entrance exam. There is some money in it as well." And when the bus was ready to leave, he had said to him, "Now that you are leaving, go, but make sure you make a decent human being of yourself and come back." That is all the father had said to his son at his departure from the village.

Salim remembered his father's words... "make a human being of yourself." These words echoed in his ears once again. Salim finished all the do his father had put in the suitcase for him. He took his entrance exam, passed it, finished the university and started working. It was in that very suitcase that he kept all the letter his father had sent to him from the village. And now he was putting father himself in that suitcase. Lifting the suitcase, Salim was surprised to see that his heavily built father had now become so light as to fit the suitcase easily. That big

man was in his hand in that colorful suitcase. He put his father in the car trunk and took a deep breath.

"Be a human!"

This time the voice came from the car trunk. That gave Salim goose flesh and made him walk away from the car. He tried to calm himself by thinking, "I am the perfect human being for the time we live in. These days, whoever is able to find a way out of problems is the true human being..." As far as status was concerned, he considered himself someone who had accomplished a lot, and it seemed to him that he had listened to his father's advice. "It is not easy. At 38, I am the branch director of a big institution and I am about to become the vice president in a matter of days. What else do you want?"

From his school years he had learned how to use his intelligence, not in gaining knowledge, but in being able to pass without making any effort. For him, being a human being meant having a high position.

Salim was involved in his thoughts when he notice Ghulam Dayi was getting ready to leave. Salim said, "Where are you going, wait, we are not finished yet."

Ghulam Dayi thought, Salim wants to pay for his services.

"Salim, I told you my first condition and you accepted it; now I want to tell you the second one. I am not going to accept any money from you for this job. If I do, I am afraid my grave will break open when I am dead. You see, I don't want to be sinful before God. Now give me a ride home..." Salim was now caught in a very bad situation. he did not have any other choice but to disclose the matter:

"Ghulam Dayi, may God bless you, you didn't accept money to close it again?"

Ghulam did not understand what he meant at first, Salim further explained, "A very reasonable man is dead, Ghulam Dayi, he was a very close friend of mine, may he rest in peace... we want to bury him here...you are a wise man. You understand... don't you?"

It was as if Ghulam Dayi were struck by lightning.

"What? In your father's place?"

"Why not, may God bless his soul, that man was like a father to me too..."

"You take your natural father out of his grave, for a newly found

4: Teacher.

father? What kind of a person are you?"

"Ghulam Dayi, the deed is done," he said, and started putting the tiles around the grave.

"Please would you help me put these tiles around the grave... I will be obliged forever."

"I don't care about your sin, but why did you involve me in this sin, you bastard?"

"Eh... Ashi... what is the difference between this body or that other one. What is so sinful about this, I don't understand."

Ghulam Dayi was very angry. Not paying any attention to Salim's begging, he took his pickaxe and put it into his sack and left the grave site. Salim tried to stop him. "Please don't leave me alone like this, I beg you."

"Get out of my way," Ghulam pushed Salim aside and continued on his way. After a few steps he turned to Salim and said. "I have lived all these years but have never seen such dishonesty as I saw today... may God save us from the worst."

Salim followed Ghulam with his eyes for awhile and shook his head...

"What should I do now? How do I finish this job?" he thought. He then remembered the stone carvers on the north side of the graveyard, and headed straight toward them.

Two hours later the grave was ready and decorated with the tiles.

Yes... and now we have reached the last part of our story. After thoughtful burial, Husein Khalidovich embraced Salim and thanked him. One week after that, Salim was appointed vice president. Soon after this, Karim and Rahim, who now had a common enemy, became very close friends.

Everything was going according to Salim's plans. The only problem, however, was the colorful suitcase that was in his car trunk waiting for its fate. After the burial, Salim sent a message to his cousin in the village asking him to come to the city as soon as possible. He was told when he called, that his cousin was abroad and would not be back for a month. Salim's only problem now was to get rid of the suitcase. But how? He could not share his secret with anyone other than the cousin who was not available. Salim had not been able to enjoy his new position in comfort. The suitcase was

turning into a source of fright for him. Now his father would appear in his dream every night reproaching him and saying to him, 'Be a human.' The night before he had dreamed of his father telling him to 'be a human' and Salim had answered him, "What do you want from me? Why don't you leave me alone? You threw me out of your house, I came to the city and I went to the university on my own and became a human. You were head of a small village council. I am in this high position in this big city. Do you still see me as your inferior?" His father responded by laughing,

"You have become this old and have not cared for a single person in your life but yourself."

Salim had said, "What do you mean. Do you mean I haven't been helpful to others? But, what about Husein Khalidovich, didn't I help him find a grave for his brother-in-law?" His father had answered, "Well, that's the point, you couldn't have done it if it wasn't for me. You got this position through my grave... Do you still have more to say?"

This dream affected Salim tremendously, but he was still not ashamed. He kept trying to push the thought of the suitcase out of his mind. He moved on his seat and called the secretary,

"Send the visitors in, one at a time."

Now, those who entered the room to ask the vice president for any favor would think he had reached this position through hard work. How would they know that he was standing on his father's bones in this position.

Our story is over, but one wonders whether to laugh or to cry.

February 1986

Flattery

(Yaltaglı)

Bahtiyar Vahabzade

Trans. Shouleh Vatanabadi

He was the only person who could solve my problem. Not only me, but everyone around me was aware of this fact. My friends insisted that I find a way to see him at his office. This was, of course possible, but I wasn't sure he would actually agree to help me. People who knew him never spoke well of him. It was said that he was merciless. It was also said that he enjoyed being flattered. This was a big problem for me, since I was neither good at flattery, nor liked to receive any flattering compliments myself. I think giving compliments needs a special expertise, otherwise, they sound insipid.

Everyone agreed, however, that if I got a chance to meet him, I had to come up with smart and tasteful compliments for him.

I have been to many parties. I have never given a toast. I don't understand the reason for giving complimentary toasts. Doesn't the person who receives these compliments know what kind of a person he or she is? Why should we tell people things they already know about themselves? And if they don't deserve the compliments, then why should we tell lies? Why should we fool people? They

just take these lies as truth and get carried away.

At parties, in order to give a toast, you see someone get up and compliment a person as small as a Chirtan¹, compare him to Napoleon and Julius Caesar and say, "All the valuable things like gold and pearl are also small," and conclude that being small means being valuable. At such occasions, I think Chirtan should get up and smash a bottle of champagne on the head of the person giving these compliments and say, "Who do you think you are fooling? How can you compare me to Napoleon? Do you think I don't understand you are lying?"

But this never happens. The compliments are poured on Chirtan and he looks around to see how these beautiful words are impressing the guests. At this point, I get angry and want the champagne bottle to be smashed on Chirtan's head instead.

This is the way I am, and I can't change myself. My friends say, "Be anyway you want, but be aware that to solve your problem, you should go to see Chirtan in all politeness and tell him that he is not a Chirtan, on the contrary, he is the Dev² of all Devs." But he is Chirtan. How can I call Chirtan a Dev? My friends insist, "This is just loose talk, by calling black white, white will not turn into black."

I didn't want to yield to this logic. Then I remembered my little daughter. Everyone at home knew that, among my children, I liked my daughter the most. Anytime I returned home, she would open the door for me and give me a hug and ask me to kiss her. I would kiss her at the door, then go inside. I thought, what is my daughter's fault? I have brought her into this world and am responsible for providing her with a decent life. For the sake of this innocent girl, I must go and call Chirtan, not just a Dev, but the king of all Devs.

With this reasoning, I found myself in Chirtan's illuminating presence one day. He scrutinized me and gave me a sarcastic

smile, as if he wanted to say, "So, what happened to your pride?" Not paying any attention to this. I started pouring out the flattering words that I had prepared and memorized, "You...your character...I am counting on your help..."

Chirtan, in return gave me a meaningful look, as if he wanted to say, "I know you, you are lying..., but let's hear it, I enjoy it..."

"I have come to see you hoping you will help me. I believe in your kindness..." Saying these, my voice sounded weird and artificial to me, as if my voice was coming out of a stinking well. I despised myself, I was losing my control. However I had to finish my sentence. "You have been so kind to help lots of people."

All of the sudden I heard a voice inside me saying, "Damn you liar." But then I thought I should finish my sentence and get it done with.

"Consider me as another person who needs your help," I said. I raised my head and looked at this face. Chirtan now seemed to me as big as a Dev. He sulked and looked at me with scorn, "Look," he said. "Stop these meaningless words and get to the point."

I was speechless. I understood what he meant. I realized that I had not been able to play my role. Flattery is an art in itself and needs a special talent. Anyway, my arrow had missed its mark. I had not been able to reach my objective. But I admire the man for his straightforwardness. He had gained my respect. We had noticed the artificiality of my words.

I remembered the champagne bottle that was supposed to burst on Chirtan's head. Now I was the one who truly deserved that bottle...

Disappointed, I returned home. As usual, my daughter opened the door and hugged me, "Kiss me," she said. I couldn't. I remembered myself in Chirtan's office, the stinking and flattering words I had used. I was ashamed of myself and could not look in my daughter's eyes. I thought to myself, she thinks of me as the strongest person in the world. If she had only seen her wretched

1: A folk tale character who is very small and very shrewd.

2: Giant.

father an hour ago.... My wife knew where I had been. She didn't ask any questions. From the way I looked, she could tell what the outcome of the meeting was.

Ever since that day, the things I said to Chirtan have echoed in my ears and made me hate myself.

"Goodness is in your nature. You have been kind to many people..."
The memory of that event disturbed my peace for twenty years.



Life has now turned me into a Chirtan. The same flattering words are being poured on me, "You have been always kind to lots of people. Goodness is in your nature..." I think, the flattering words have remained the same during these twenty years. I am aware of the artificiality of these words, but why do I enjoy hearing them? If I enjoy them, then why do I loathe flattery? Don't I say the same words to people above my rank? The truth is that I have now graduated from the school of flattery and have mastered the art!

I get goose bumps, and say to the man sitting in front of me "Look here, stop these meaningless words and get to the point."

The poor guy gets pale, his hands start shaking...he realizes that his request for help has been useless. He takes out his handkerchief and wipes the sweat off his forehead. I understand that he is now in the same situation that I was in twenty years ago. He can't play his part well, he has not mastered the art of flattery yet. He is an amateur, but will learn in time....

He leaves. I feel sorry for him and angry at myself. Later I think, now this poor guy will go home and be unable to look his daughter in the eyes. How many years is he going to hear the echo of the flattering words he wasted on me? How many years is he going to be disturbed by them?



Days and nights go by, and there is no end to this double-faced world....

My Grandmother's Carpet

(Nanamin Khalchasi)

Bahtiyar Vahabzade

Trans. Shouleh Vatanadadi

I am a painter, an artist. Oops...looks like my first sentence came out a bit bombastic, but that is how everyone knows me. Or rather, that is how I have made myself known to others. All my life I have expressed my feelings through the magic of colors. It is now very difficult for me to express myself using words. Now let me see, maybe I shouldn't use the word 'difficult' here. The thing is, I have always been able to express myself in an indirect way through the medium of colors. I can't express myself like that through words. Painters know how to use colors to express meaning. Writers, however, use words to express their feelings. Well, any way, why have I now sought refuge in words? Why do I want to give voice to my feelings, not through the medium of colors, but words? What is making me do this? Have I fancied becoming a writer now? No, not at all!

After thirty years of speaking through the language of colors and shades, I have now come to the realization that, as a painter, I have not been able to fully open my heart. I have not been able to portray my feeling through a mixture of colors. The same colors

that, in the hands of painters like Michelangelo, Rafael, and Goya have created masterpieces. To me they are insufficient. Can it be that I have had greater thoughts and feelings than they? But, isn't this also inflated and egocentric? Maybe it only shows my weakness and lack of talent.

Once, I thought myself a master of colors. I was a very popular artist. My work was presented at a number of exhibitions all over the world. I was known as an avant-garde artist. I wonder why?

Now I need to express the storm in my heart, things that I never said as a painter, through a different medium. Reflecting on my past, searching through my works, I can't find the expression for my new feeling. What is this new feeling? I look at my paintings. One of them expresses remorse in the eyes of an old person, another one shows desire in the eyes of a young lover, the other portrays a worker's fatigue as he returns home from a nightshift, and another a young mother's worry. I think that these are not bad in their own right. What is it that I need to find in these works? What have I not said in the old works? This is what I am trying to find out. I compare the colors in the pictures with the colors in my heart. The colors in the pictures don't reflect my heart. The colors in my heart need to be voiced.

I've got it, a self portrait. I have to paint my own portrait to express my feelings.

For months I work on this project day and night. I try to express the storm in my heart through the details of my face and my puzzled eyes. I am not very good looking. In my portrait, I try to make myself look better and that makes things worse. Instead of expressing my inner feelings, I turn into a make-up artist to improve my physical appearance...this project is not successful.

Finally, I decide to throw the brush away and pick up the pen. I try to create a true and honest self-portrait with words not colors. I haven't achieved this with the language of colors. A mirror or a photograph can reflect appearances, but through what medium can I portray my inner feelings?

In this undertaking, I seek the help of my mother tongue through which our people have given voice to their joys and sorrows, love and desire, disappointments, and history. I set out to express myself through this silenced treasure.

My first inquiry is, who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going?

I opened my eyes to the world in a village called Uchgar. Rather, I should say, I opened my eyes to my 'village' not to the 'world.' I opened my eyes and found myself in a very small village. Small? Well, I call it 'small' now. Then it looked very big to me. To me that village was the whole world. I had not seen any other place comparable to the size of my village. I was born and raised in a mud hut. I considered our mud hut a very large building. There, I learned to walk. There, I listened to my mother's lullabies and my grandmother's stories.

The greatest lady in the world, my grandmother, was a first class carpet weaver in our village. While weaving the carpets with colorful threads, she sang folk songs. Before my eyes the colorful threads and songs were woven together. My understanding of this world started with my grandmother's songs and colors. The source of the colors in my grandmother's carpets were plants and flowers. She used to get up at the crack of dawn in search of them. Sometimes, she took me along with her. We climbed the mountains and cliffs together.

Our village was located in the valley between the Kahrizoba and Ainabulag mountains. The slopes of the mountains were covered with wild roses. These flowers would last from the month of May until October. When I was a child, I always thought the dye for my grandmother's carpet came from this slope. Later on, I learned that the source of her dyes came from far away, at the tops of the mountains.

I have drawn ever since I was a child. But I liked to draw the things that I imagined in Grandmother's stories, not the things I

saw. I liked to draw the seven-headed demon, the treasure box discovered in the sea, the apple tree in the king's garden, and the girl snatcher giant. One day, I drew a picture of the Bubi bird. The bird looked more like an owl than Bubi. My mother said it was an owl, I insisted it was a Bubi.

"Have you seen a Bubi?"

"I have," I said.

My mother started laughing and I got angry.

"Why are you laughing?"

"My darling, no one has seen the Bubi bird."

"But I have seen it..."

In fact I had only seen it in my imagination, and I had pictured the bird like an owl because of its sorrowful chirping.

My teacher always encouraged me to draw. Mina was my mother's distant relative. Actually, in our village everyone was related. My teacher would always bring me colored pencils from town and would encourage me to draw beautiful scenes from our mountains.

I have special memories of the people in my village. My mother always sent me to buy tea and sugar from the village grocer. The grocer, Uncle Shiraslan, was a very humorous man. He would joke with everyone. One day as I was going to buy sugar, I came across some kids who were going raspberry picking. I decided to join them. "This bush mine, that bush yours." I ate lots of raspberries. With the raspberry juice all over my hands and face, I went to the grocer's shop. Seeing me like that, Uncle Shiraslan burst into laughter and said,

"Hey man, you can feed three dogs with that juice on your face."

"I have been eating raspberries on my way here."

"Then why didn't you bring me some?"

I didn't know what to say.

"Look son," he said, "I really need raspberries to make raspberry jam. Where can you find them? Tell me so that I can send the kids to get me some."

"The bushes are around the cliff, but they are hard to reach."

"Why didn't you cut your head off and put it under your feet to stand taller?"

Uncle Shiraslan would even joke with a young child like me. I really liked this. One could sense warmth and kindness in the way he talked to people.

One day, when I had gone to Khanyeylagi with my grandmother, I slipped from the cliff. My grandmother used to tell me not to look down when climbing or else I would get dizzy. On that day, I heard something in the canyon and looked down. I fell and while I was rolling I got caught in a tree, otherwise I would have rolled down to the canyon...I grabbed the tree and got up, but I had injured my right foot. The kids in the canyon came to my rescue. Somehow, they managed to drag me home. The news of my fall spread all over the village. Every one was talking about me. "Hajar's grandson has fallen down from the cliff." In an hour everybody in the village was in our house. Everybody recommended a remedy. They even sent for a bonesetter... the bonesetter, Karim Baba, came immediately. He massaged my foot and set my bone. This is how our village was...

Time passed, I grew up. While I was still at school my grandmother passed away. I was left alone with no one to take care of me. No, I am wrong. All of the young women in the village became a mother to me, the old women, grandmothers and the men, my father.

When I finished seventh grade, my teacher Mina brought me to Baku. I got accepted into the fine arts institute. After graduating, I went to Moscow and entered the academy of fine arts. There I was trained by famous painters, and realized that in order to be a successful artist, one has to destroy the old artistic forms and create new ones. I was a true avant-garde painter, to the point that I became critical of all the classical schools of painting.

One day, I came across a very interesting painting in one of the foreign journals. It was a painting by a newly discovered French painter. After seeing that painting, I kept following the works of this artist. There was a special originality in his art. How had he found

this originality? I painted a few pictures under his influence. These paintings were very well received as originals. But, in my opinion, there was no expression of my feelings in them. I gave up and went back to my old style.

Years passed, I became a professional painter and went back to Baku. It didn't take long for me to become a well-known painter in our republic. I still wasn't satisfied. I was well-known, but not any different from the other painters. To be different, I needed to have originality in my work, but I had not been able to find that.

In those days of turmoil, I remembered the French painter and again painted a picture in his style. It was an illustration from a novel, "The Flying Sea Gulls." The flight of the sea gulls was depicted in such a way that the empty spots between their wings looked like another pair of wings. The whole surface of the canvas was used. My friends were impressed with this painting. I was so excited that I couldn't stand still. All the painters admired my work and congratulated me. A painter whom I had always admired shook my hand and said to me, "You have finally found your own style." "My style..." sounded nice. But if he didn't know, I knew well that it was not really mine. It belonged to that French painter. The truth was that I had copied him. But how could I confess? I enjoyed the admiration of the public, but, I was torn inside. What could I do? I carried on this way for twenty-five years. Now, I had my own followers, and called them 'imitators of the imitator.' I was known in my country as an innovative artist, while I copied the works of the French painter. His work was my source of inspiration.

One day, one of my friends showed me a reproduction of one of the French painter's works and said, "Look at this, it looks just like your work, but a very weak imitation of it." I was quite familiar with this painting and had always considered it in a much higher level than my own work.

Conscience awakened, I said, "It looks like my work, but it's much better than mine." My friend insisted that it was an imitation of my work.

When we showed the reproduction to a famous painter who admired my work, he had the same opinion, "One can tell immediately that this is a shadow of your work." Although I enjoyed the trust of my friends and felt guilty about the French painter, I remained silent not daring to confess.

I showed the reproduction to some other friends and they all reacted the same way. Why? I wondered. Was it national pride that stopped my friends from looking down on my work? No, on the contrary, given the competitiveness of the art world, this could not be the case.

One day I decided to write a letter to the French painter. I sent the letter to an address that I had found in the journal of the painter's association to which he belonged. I wrote to him that I had followed his work for twenty five years. I admired him and considered him a true artist. I wanted to confess that I had imitated his work, but I couldn't. Then I thought, why was I writing the letter? I had to confess and get it off my chest. I included my confession and sent him the letter after translating it into French. I felt relieved.

I waited for the answer. I had sworn not to paint until I received it. I was not sure the kind of answer I would get in that letter. Finally, it came. I am now writing it, exactly for you.

"My dear colleague, thank you for your kind letter. I have always longed to come to your country to see the mountain villages like Kahrizoba. This village is famous for its carpets all over the world. When I was younger, I saw a picture of one of these carpets. I was fascinated by the designs and colors. These carpets, woven by illiterate women, are valuable works of art. The designs in these carpets are the basis of my works. Using this opportunity I wanted to ask you, if possible, to send me more pictures of the carpets from your village."

I was astonished, the French painter was an imitator of my grandmother and I of him. That's why my colleagues considered my work original and his an imitation. I was looking for my own original style not within myself, but outside of me. It is said, "The grass is always greener on the other side."

Doubt

(Shubba)

Bakhtiyar Vahabzada

Trans. Shouleh Vatanabadi

Once upon a time in a city called Andahat there lived a strange and shrewd Shah. This Shah hated the truth and liked lies. He didn't know who his father was. All he knew about his father was that his father was not a Shah. Therefore, he had to lie and demanded lies from everyone else, for it was not beneficial to him if his subjects spoke the truth. Then his right to the throne might be questioned. Lies were spread all over the country from the palace to the villages and from the villages back to the palace. Everyone was aware of the fact that lying was an essential means of communication in that country. Colorful lies covered the rampant corruption.

Like all Shahs, this Shah had a Jester with a funny outfit and lots of knick-knacks around his neck. The Jester entertained the Shah with his dance and farfetched lies. The Jester always sang a famous song when he danced:

"I am prosperous, prosperous,
you are my Shah,
My Shah, my protector."

The Shah considered his Jester the wisest person in the kingdom and issued an order that everyone should learn the Jester's Song. After this order, to prove their loyalty to the Shah, and out of fear, all the subjects began to sing the Jester's Song: "I am prosperous, I am prosperous." It delighted the Shah to see the homeless and the hungry singing this song.

It didn't take long for everyone in the country to become a professional liar. Lying became part of the routine of life. Nobody was ashamed of telling lies. Why should a liar be shamed before another liar? Liars were rewarded with respect and status.

It was very difficult for people to communicate since words had lost their significance and gained contradictory meanings. For example, black meant white, good meant bad, and long meant short. The older generation was left in astonishment and had difficulty understanding the new generation. They turned a blind eye to whatever was happening around them.

At school, children were taught different variations of lies and that it was honest to be corrupt and to cheat. Student learned to understand one way and speak another. Once a teacher asked the students,

"If our Shah says there is no sun in the sky, what does that mean?" And the children responded,

"It definitely means there is no sun in the sky."

The teacher continued,

"If you see a Shah's agent beat a villager and claim that he is doing that for the villager's own good, what would you say?"

To answer, a student stood up,

"Then I would say the Shah's agent is correct."

Then the teacher went on,

"The Shah's agents are always right. We should believe not in what we see, but in what we hear."

To directly contradict the Shah was officially prohibited. For example, if the Shah would point to Hassan's house, and ask if it were Mohammad's house, it was prohibited to say, "No, this is not

Mohammad's house." The proper answer to this question was, "Yes, this is Hassan's house."

History had not seen a Shah like this before. The Shah knew well how to fool people with words and how to make his subjects dance to his tune. People in the neighboring countries heard about this theater and wondered when the time would come that they too would fall into the trap. They knew it was possible to wake up one day and find themselves under the dominance of this Shah. To pledge their obedience they would have to say, "Your highness, we are thankful to have you as our ruler and protector, without you, we could never manage our own riches and resources."

Every once in a while, the Shah, accompanied by his ministers, paid a visit to the prisons. He enjoyed watching the punishment of those who dared to tell the truth. On one of these visits, the Shah demanded to see the oldest prisoners. The warden took the Shah aside and whispered to him, "Your majesty, some of these prisoners have been here since Nova's time. The Shah ordered, 'I want them to be taught to sing the Jester's Song.'" The Jester was immediately called and informed of the Shah's order. For seven days and nights, the Jester taught his song to the prisoners. Once they learned, the Shah was invited to visit the prison. The wretched prisoners, who were mere skin and bones, started dancing and singing, "I am prosperous, I am prosperous." The sight of these deprived dancing to the tune of prosperity looked extremely funny.

Now don't take this Shah for a fool, he was well aware that the only way to control people and to cover the realities of hunger and misery in the country was through such games and shows. In short, everyone in the country was dancing with an empty stomach and the Shah enjoyed the show.

The Shah liked giving speeches. In these speeches, he talked about the welfare of his subjects and how he cared for them. The people listened to these speeches with enthusiasm and still demanded more. Why not? Without these speeches, how could the people know

about 'justice' and 'well-being' in their country?

Let me tell you now of the Shah's beautiful wife who had fallen in love with the minister's son and he for her. While the Shah was busy with his speeches, the two lovers were swimming in the sea of love... In no time, the Shah's wife gave birth to a son. The Shah was delighted and the people were informed of the birth of the Crown Prince. But the Shah was disappointed once he saw the son. He asked his wife, "Why is he blond?" The wife responded, "The son is yours and he has taken after your father."

Years passed by. The lies grew bigger and bigger and the old lies bred new ones. One day the Shah asked the town callers to announce a competition for lying in the country. Whoever came up with the biggest lie, would win a golden stick as a prize.

The professional liars all gathered in front of the palace. While the competition was going on, the Jester entertained everyone with his dancing and his famous song. One of the competitors came forward, bowed in front of the Shah and said, "Your majesty, my big lie is that, you are the only truth-loving person in the world." The Shah laughed at this and protested, "What you are saying is indeed a big lie. I like it. But my subjects have learned to say and understand everything in its opposite. Now, if they think about the opposite of what you just said, it will be like saying, I am the biggest lie in the whole world. And everyone is aware of this, and this can not be accepted as a lie."

Another liar came forward, "Your majesty, my lie is that, your reign depends on the Jester's Song." The Shah started laughing at first, then he stormed at the liar, "What? What did you say? My reign depends on the Jester's Song?" "Yes, Sir!" The Shah went on, "Is that the truth or a lie to you?" "I have come here before you to tell a lie." "Then is what you are saying a lie?" The Shah turned to the Jester

and asked,

"What do you say to this, Jester?"

The Jester responded,

"Looks like he has a loose screw. Dear king, don't pay any attention to him."

The Shah then ordered the man put in an asylum. Thus none of the liars won the competition. All of a sudden, a villager showed up and said,

"Your majesty, if I offend you with what I say, you can order your men to behead me, for my lie is really big..."

The Shah ordered the man to proceed.

"My dear Shah, your wife had an affair with the minister's son, and there is proof..."

"What?"

"Yes, your majesty."

The Shah thought for awhile. How could he argue with the villager? If he said it could not be true, the man had come up with a lie and had to be awarded with the prize. If he did not accept what the villager said as a lie, it meant that his wife...

The Shah was torn inside. He, then, ordered the golden stick to be fetched. With hesitation, he gave the stick to the man and said, "My smart subject, I give you the golden stick, what are you going to give me in return?"

The villager responded,

"I did what I was supposed to do. You wanted a lie from me and I gave it to you."

"That lie was for my ears, what do you have for my eyes? Give me something that I can see and hold, like the stick that I am giving you."

"I will do that, but on one condition."

"What is it?"

"I am going to weave a unique carpet for you."

"Very well, but tell me what is so special about this carpet?"

"The carpet will be special. Whoever looks at it will see his or her parent's image in it. But this carpet is not for illegitimate people, for they won't be able to see anything in the carpet."

The Shah was taken by surprise at first, then he seemed pleased with the idea,

"Tell me, what do you need to weave this carpet?"

"Fifty thousand dinars and three years."

The Shah agreed.



From that day on the Shah kept thinking about the carpet and couldn't wait until it was finished. This carpet would reveal many palace secrets to him. Three month before the date of completion, the Shah sent his men to the villager's house to find out how the work was progressing. Once the villager learned about this visit, he hung a white sheet from the loom and pretended to put the last touches on the carpet while singing a song. The Shah's messengers were surprised to find a white plain sheet on the loom instead of a carpet.

The villager went on,

"Do you see these flowers on the carpet, these?..."

One of the messengers came forward, examined the white sheet closely and said,

"What? What are you talking about?"

The villager shouted at him,

"What do you mean, what? Can't you see all these red blossoms?"

He, then, turned to the other messenger and said,

"Looks like your friend has a secret and that secret is not allowing him to see anything in the carpet."

Realizing what the villager meant, the messenger tried to cover his mistake and said,

"Oh, are you talking about these flowers on the carpet, yes they are indeed very beautiful."

The villager went on,

"Now look at the flowers on this side of the carpet." The messenger looked carefully, and remained silent. Not being able to see anything on the carpet, the messengers were doubting their legitimacy, so as not to lose face, they admired the buds and flower designs on the carpet.

"Well done!"

"Beautiful! It looks just like a real flower."

"This carpet is very valuable."

When the messenger got back to the palace, they all started talking about the carpet to the Shah. Every week the Shah would send people to the villager's house and the same scene was repeated. The messengers were at first surprised, then doubting their own legitimacy, they had no other choice but to admire the supposedly beautiful designs in the carpet.

Everyone praised the carpet in public. But at night in the privacy of their homes, they laughed at this masquerade. No one dared to speak the truth, since everyone's reputation was at stake....

The day of completion arrived. The villager, with the "carpet" under his arm, followed by noblemen, entered the palace, spread the white sheet in front of the throne and proceeded, "Your majesty, here is that magical carpet. With this you will be able to tell who is a bastard."

"But we don't have any bastards in this court," the noblemen exclaimed. To prove their legitimacy, however, each of them pretended to see the image of his parents in between the flower designs of the carpet. The Shah was silent. He could not see anything in the carpet and he knew why...

All of the sudden, the Shah realized the everyone was looking at him. He knew what they were thinking. He got up, went closer to the white sheet and said to the villager,

"Well done! Well done! Good job!"

The villager got the point immediately.

The Shah was not praising the carpet, but the villager himself. Instead of "Well done," the Shah had wanted to say, "You outsmarted me for a second time."

The villager asked the Shah,

"Your majesty, who do you see in the carpet?"

The Shah, with no hesitation, responded,

"My father, may God bless his soul,"

"What do you see on his head?"

The Shah got angry at this question,

"Don't you see it yourself? Why are you asking me?"

"Your majesty, I see my father and on his head I see his hat. What about you? What do you see on your father's head?"

The Shah, who was very aggravated, said,

"Stupid man, your father was a commoner and mine a Shah. What can you find on a Shah's head? Tell me now why my father is blond?"

The villager whispered quietly,

"My Shah, I didn't know your father, I don't know how he got to be blond."

The Shah, who was now very disturbed, tried to find a way out of this annoying situation. He also noticed that the noblemen looked worried. "They were undoubtedly thinking that the Shah might replace one of them with the villager. The Shah finally looked at the villager and asked,

"You are a very smart man. I have a question for you. If you answer this question, I will give you a high position in the palace."

This made the noblemen even more worried.

"Please ask your question, your majesty," the villager said.

"Can you tell me what the people here are thinking right now?"

The villager was well aware of what was going on in the noblemen's mind, but could not mention it,

"Would you like me to tell you what each of them is thinking, or all of them?"

"Tell me what all of them are thinking."

"They all have one thought, they are all wishing for a long life for you. If you don't believe me, ask them."

At this time the Shah heard the Jester singing to himself, "Oh people, I am prosperous..I am prosperous..." The Shah whispered to himself, "You big liar..damn you big liar..."

Three apples fell from the sky, one of them for the people of Andahar, one for the villager, and one for those who are reading this story.



The Lie

Bahtiyar Vahabzade

Trans. by Shouleh Vatanabadi

Scene

A Moscow airport. The passenger terminal. People look anxious and restless, some of them carry luggage. Flights are being announced, everyone is listening carefully.

The announcer: Flight number 2981 to Alma Ata will be delayed until 2:00. *(Sounds of protest)* Flight number 861 to Baku will be delayed until 3:00... I repeat, Flight number 861 to Baku will be delayed until 3:00.

(People wait in line in front of the long distance telephone booths)

Act I

Imran:

(At the phone booth) Galichka, I am calling from the airport... yes... I haven't left yet. It is hot. There has been a delay in all the flights since yesterday. You stay at home, I will call you from the airport as soon as I arrive. This is terrible... yes, I bought what you

asked for. Okay, I kiss you.

(Two people are waiting in front of the phone booth)

Aydin: Teymour

Teymour: Aydin!

Aydin: All these years we lived in the same town, but...

Teymour: We couldn't see each other.

Aydin: Who is to blame?

Teymour: Neither of us.

Aydin: Then who?

Teymour: Lack of time I guess.

Aydin: What a surprise to see you here!

Teymour: Let me surprise you more. Look, next to that news stand, I just saw someone resembling Imran.

Aydin: Didn't you talk to him?

Teymour: He passed by me like a person who had just seen a snake...

Aydin: Are you sure it's him?

Teymour: It was him, I could tell from the way he behaved.

Aydin: I don't get it, why should he behave like this?

Teymour: It's a long story. Let's forget that. Tell me, how are you? Aren't you married yet? It is time for you to become a father.

Aydin: *(Showing the container in his hand)* These things don't leave me any time...

Teymour: What things?

Aydin: My insects... if I don't go to Baku today they will die, with the food I have for them they only last 7 hours. Tell me, what happened to you and Imran?

Teymour: It happened last year. Imran asked me to hire his son at the laboratory where I work. I told him there were no openings. Shortly after this, our director hired someone. When Imran heard about it, he called and trashed me with his curses. I couldn't convince him that I had no role in this.

Aydin: How come you never told me about this?

Teymour: Since then, we have seen each other once, at the symposium in Dushambe. I didn't tell you about it then. I didn't want to talk about it.

Aydin: Of course, you are right, but you shouldn't make a big deal out of it. We have been good friends with Imran. We have spent so much time in his house. Do you remember his father?

Teymour: How can one forget Gudrat Ami?

Aydin: You are right, let's find him and you two may make up.

Teymour: Aydin, don't even think about it.

Aydin: Why?

Teymour: Some other time maybe.

Aydin: Teymour!

Teymour: Let's change the subject. First of all let me congratulate you on your scholarly accomplishments these past years. I read about them in the Academy's bulletin. You have done a great job.

Aydin: You yourself have been very active too... did you

finish the book you were working on?

Teymour: It is submitted for publication.

Aydin: Have there been any books superior to the "Red Book" published lately?

Teymour: As many as you desire.

Aydin: Looks like the whole world is changing.

Teymour: You are right, my brother.

Aydin: This is all so terrible, the whole earth is changing. Looks like we have gone wrong somehow. We made a mistake somewhere. These past years the dangerous insects have increased destroying the beneficial insects. Actually, it looks like the conditions are being provided for the dangerous insects to increase... how is it going to end?

Teymour: I am worried about the time when everything gets out of control, then the "Red Books" become part of history.

Announcer: Flight number 861 to Baku is delayed until 4 o'clock.

Aydin: Damn it. There is no hope now.

Teymour: I have been here since yesterday evening. There hasn't been one flight to Baku. If it were a different time, I wouldn't mind. Today my son was supposed to come to Baku for one day on leave from his military duty. He is flying to the Far East tomorrow. There is a saying... "you do what you should do and wait to see how fate can change it all." *(He is looks at the telephone booth)*

Aydin: I didn't know that Murad is doing his military service. Time flies. He was a little child not long ago. I still think of Murad as a naughty three year old with

his tricycle. Remember how we used to force him to eat his food... I used to pretend I was a goat, and you used to become a rooster just to encourage him to eat!

Teymour: As they grow up, we become old. *(He looks at the telephone booth again.)*

Aydin: Do you remember the time when, you, Imran and I went to Moscow to celebrate our graduation from the university?

Teymour: Yes there is a big difference between this trip to Moscow and that one. We were not in a rush to get back then. Now we are.

Aydin: You're right. Now I am in a rush, you are in a rush, so are all these people. But nature doesn't rush at all. This terrible weather reminds me that it is useless to be on the run... It is as if it is telling us all "Don't try to go against me or else you will suffer the consequences."

Teymour: We see the consequences right now.

(Timur's turn has come to use the phone.)

Aydin: I should at least talk to my son on the phone. I won't be able to see him.

(He gets into the phone booth.)

(Aydin lights a cigarette and walks around, Imran shows up.)

Imran: Hello, man.

Aydin: Hello Imran. Long time no see. I was looking for you.

Imran: Looks like you have been talking with Teymour about me.

Aydin: How did you know?

Imran: I know that selfish Teymour well? Let's go.

Aydin: Where?

Imran: Wherever I am going.

Aydin: I am waiting for Teymour.

Imran: What is so special about Teymour?

Aydin: Friendship.

Imran: Am I not a friend?

Aydin: Look Imran, we are old friends... these trivial issues should not ruin our friendship.

Imran: Why are you saying this to me? Say it to your good old friend. What have I done to him? It is all his fault.

Aydin: He is a very fair person.

Imran: Do you mean I am the one who is unfair?

Aydin: Stop it!

Imran: What are you carrying with you?

Aydin: A container.

Imran: What is inside?

Aydin: Insects.

Imran: Do you think there aren't enough of them in Baku?
(Pause) You should have put Teymour in this container as well, to be with his own kind.

Aydin: Imran, you know I don't like tasteless jokes.

Imran: If you are looking for something tasty, let's go to the

restaurant, we have a lot of time to kill.

Aydin: Only if we take Teymour too.

Imran: That's all we need.

Aydin: Don't be a kid Imran... you always blow things out of proportion.

Imran: Do you think you know everything in this world? It isn't so.

Aydin: How is it then?

Imran: You see the world from your own perspective. Of course each person has a perspective of his own. But the world goes on its own way.

Aydin: You are right.

Imran: This is not funny.

Aydin: No, I mean it. You find out about things once you measure the issues from your perspective.

Imran: Long live measuring. Let's go.

Aydin: I am one year older than both of you. I will force you to make up, that's the end of the argument. *(He heads toward the telephone booth where Teymour is, but another person is in the booth)* Where did he go?

Imran: You see now? He doesn't want to face me either.

Aydin: I will find him.

Imran: How are you going to find him in this crowd? Let's go. *(Aydin follows Imran while he looks around to find Teymour)*

(In the restaurant)

Imran: You are a good friend.

- Aydin:** You say this only now.
- Imran:** Let's drink to your insects... because they know more about their responsibilities than many of us.
- Aydin:** Do you mean... ?
- Imran:** Yes.
- Aydin:** Okay... these poor insects deserve a toast, especially right now since their food is about gone. If they die, all my work will go down the drain.
- Imran:** See what has become of us, sitting and toasting the insects.
- Aydin:** Do you know how much they cost?
- Imran:** I don't know.
- Aydin:** They are useful for you too.
- Imran:** Why?
- Aydin:** These are among the insects used in agriculture. We have brought them from California.
- Imran:** How interesting!
- Aydin:** With all the bad insects around, good insects are worth a lot. We will now try to make them adapt to their new environment. Later, they will eliminate the bad insects for us.
- Imran:** Can you find an insect that can get rid of mean people?
- Aydin:** It is possible. That requires getting rid of the bacteria called selfishness. Right now bad insects kill the good ones. We are trying to change this. I mean we are trying to have the good insects kill the bad ones.

- Imran:** Good luck!
- Aydin:** In this world everyone thinks he is right.
- Imran:** I agree with you totally, someone who ruins thirty years of friendship thinks he is right too.
- Aydin:** He who saves friendships is also right.
- Imran:** Don't mind my jokes. You know I like to make jokes all the time. But as far as Teymour, I am right to be hurt. He lied to me.
- Aydin:** No, he did not.
- Imran:** He did not employ my son, saying he had no opening, but he hired someone else instead.
- Aydin:** His director hired that person.
- Imran:** That's a lie. He could be frank about it and tell me he did not want to hire my son. Then I would think, maybe he is not sure of my son's competence. I will never forgive him. Look Aydin, I can never forgive dishonesty.
- Aydin:** Who do you think would?
- Imran:** You think Teymour is right. That is like forgiving dishonesty. Teymour, with what he did, showed me that he prefers Dashdamir to me, his old friend.
- Aydin:** What does it have to do with him?
- Imran:** He hired him instead of my son.
- Aydin:** Is that right?
- (He starts laughing)*
- Imran:** Why are you laughing?
- Aydin:** Have some sense Imran, don't curse Teymour, curse

me instead.

Imran: Why you?

Aydin: I was the one who called the director and ask him to hire Dashdamir.

Imran: Please, don't try to wash Timur's sin.

Aydin: Imran, I am telling you the truth. He did not have any role in this. When Teymour told me about this problem I didn't think. Hiring Dashdamir was a favor I had asked for.

Imran: Well, so much for friendship.

Aydin: How could I know you were trying to have your son hired there? Anyhow, do you see now that Teymour did not have anything to do with this? You have been ignoring him for no reason.

Imran: He was the one who ignored me. I have always loved you both. I drink this to your health.

Aydin: Me and Timur's health.

Imran: Whatever you say. You are both men of science. But you... you are madly in love with science. One has to fall in love with what he does. I drink to your dedication.

Aydin: Thank you.
(*They drink*)

Imran: We have accomplished a little for our age. To me whatever we have done so far is just the beginning. We have to accomplish a lot more. There are lots of problems. We should pay our dues to our country before we die.

Aydin: Now you are talking. I now see in front of me the

Imran I knew thirty years ago. Looks like you needed this drink to get back to your old self.

Imran: I am the same person. It is you guys who have kept your distance from me. You think...

Aydin: To be honest, your nasty talk a while ago made me very upset.

Imran: But you know me better.

Aydin: Anyway... I am happy to see I have found my old friend back again.

Imran: Kindness is like wings; it makes us fly.

Aydin: Well said Imran. You have beautiful feelings.

The announcer: Flight number 861 to Baku is boarding.

Aydin: Perfect.

Imran: Good, let's drink this to the opened way before us.
(*They drink*) I will be back in five or ten minutes.

(*He leaves the restaurant. Aydin looks at the clock. About half an hour is past. He gets up, pays the bill and leaves the restaurant.*)

(*In the hallway, people carrying luggage pass. Imran appears. He is talking to the flight supervisor. Teymour is standing behind.*)

Imran: That is not right, you should help.

The supervisor: It is impossible, there are no empty seats.

Imran: If you try, you can find one.

The supervisor: Do you want to sit on top of someone?

Imran: I will go standing up. I told you, I am going to my father's funeral. Why can't you understand me?

The supervisor: I do understand your situation. I sympathize with you. But, what can I do? There is only one way, see if you can ask one of the passengers to give his seat to you. I would not object to that. *(He looks at the passengers)* Dear passengers, this man is going to his father's funeral. Could anyone of you give his seat to him? *(People look at each other and remain silent)* Dear friends, this can happen to any one of us. Please do understand him, he is going to his father's funeral.

(Silence, one man among the passengers starts speaking)

A passenger: Think of it as three more hours of delay... If you are so concerned, give your own seat to him, why do you pass it to someone else?

Another passenger: Good idea.

The supervisor: So, there is not one person willing to do this? *(to Imran)* I don't think I can do more for you.

(He leaves. Aydin approached Imran. Astonished)

Aydin: What is this brother? How come you didn't mention this to me?

Imran: I didn't want to upset you.

Aydin: You are a very patient man. God bless your father, Gudrat Ami's soul. He was a very nice person... was he ill?

Imran: Yes... he had been bedridden for a month.

Aydin: I saw him at the Boulevard about a month ago. We talked a lot. He looked very healthy then.

Imran: Yes, it all happened suddenly.

Aydin: My sympathies... what can we do? We all belong to

the other world ultimately.

(The supervisor approaches Imran and gives him a ticket)

The supervisor: Here, one of you compatriots gave you his seat.

Imran: Thank you... but... who was he?

(Aydin looks at the ticket)

Aydin: This is Timur's ticket. Here look at the last name on the ticket.

Imran: *(disturbed)* This is not good.

Aydin: Why? Only Teymour could do this.

The supervisor: Citizen, be assured, I will send him with the next available flight. Now hurry up. Your name?

Aydin: Sattarov, Imran!

(The supervisor writes on the ticket and puts his signature on it. Gives it to Imran)

Imran: I feel embarrassed.

Aydin: Don't say that. I will tell him how thankful you were. Have a nice flight, hurry!

(Aydin starts walking around, Teymour approaches him)

Aydin: Teymour, bravo to you! You look very happy. I understand you... people like you enjoy helping others. But Imran is an interesting person too. We were together for about an hour at the restaurant. He didn't mention his father's death. When I asked him why, he said he didn't want to upset me. Where did you go? I looked for you. We wanted to go to the restaurant together.

Teymour: I noticed he didn't want to speak with me. That's

why, after my phone call to Baku, I disappeared.

Aydin: You shouldn't have. Was your son in Baku?

Teymour: He arrived this morning, and he is leaving tomorrow morning.

Aydin: We will go on the next flight.

Teymour: At least I heard his voice.

Aydin: You embarrassed Imran a great deal. He was looking for you to thank you.

Teymour: That's exactly why I didn't show myself.

Aydin: We will go together to pay him a visit.

Teymour: Definitely! Gudrat Ami was a very nice man. May God bless him.

(Baku airport. Arriving passengers come toward the hallway. Aydin and Teymour are among the passenger. An old man approaches them.)

The man: Aydin? Teymour? Is that you? Hello my dears.

Aydin: *(Astonished)* You... but... you.

The old man: Didn't you recognize me? How soon you forgot Gudrat Ami.

Aydin: No..we did recognize you.

Teymour: We certainly did.

Gudrat Ami: I am waiting for Imran, didn't he come with you?

Aydin: He came on the previous flight. Hasn't he arrived yet?

Gudrat Ami: No, I have been waiting for hours. This is the first flight since yesterday. I heard the previous flight

had not been able to land in Baku, it landed in Tbilisi.

Aydin: That's possible.

Gudrat Ami: How are you?

Teymour: We are fine.

Aydin: Thank you Gudrat Ami. And yourself?

Gudrat Ami: Thank God! I am well. One should always be thankful.

Aydin: You are right.

Gudrat Ami: I should check with the information... see you later.

(He leaves. Aydin and Teymour look at each other in surprise and shake their heads)

Aydin: Teymour, do you see what he did?

Teymour: I know.

Aydin: He said he would forgive everything but dishonesty.

Teymour: But it is he who is dishonest.

Aydin: Looks like it is more difficult to understand two-legged insects, who take advantage of others.

Production Notes

This book was created electronically using Adobe Pagemaker. Art was produced using Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop. The Palatino and Gill Sans Families of type-faces are used throughout this book.



A-33221

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Printed in the United States of America
ISBN: 1-878318-13-6



Indiana University Turkish Studies Publications