

**PIRIMQUL QODIROV**

**STARRY NIGHTS  
BABUR**

**NOVEL**

**Samarkand - 2019**

**UDK: 821.512.133-1**

**BBK: 84(5U)6**

**Q-53**

**Bobur**

Starry nights: novel / Bobur. Translators: I.M. Tukhtasinov, U.R. Yoldoshev, A.A. Khamidov. Editor-in-Chief: E. Muratova, Sh. Sirojiddinov. Editors: Elise Brittain (USA). – Samarkand: SamSIFL, 2018. – 446 p.

ISBN 978-9943-51-92-6-8

Pirimqul Qodirov was born on October 25 in 1928 in Kengul village in Tajikistan. His first book was "Students" and it was published when he was a student. After the university he was busy with improving his knowledge on literature.

His first novel is "Three horses" which is about new generation of young educated people who want to improve the light activity in life. Besides, he wrote novels "Black eyes", "Diamond belt", stories "My treasure", "Freedom", "Heritage".

Pirimqul Qodirov – historian writer and philosopher. He has a great share in recreating literal-historical period of Uzbekistan. He was awarded with state reward for his novel "Starry nights". Later he was awarded with honorable rank "Writer of Uzbekistan".

During his creative activity includes sixty years he wrote dozens of spiritual-ethical novels and stories such as, "Three horses", "Black eyes", "Starry nights", "Criterion of generations", "Admiration of mother hawk" novels, "Wish and people", "Prototype of Amir Temur" books.

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## **FOREWORD**

Babur Mirza's life and activities are endless like an ocean. Dozens of literary ships have sailed at it. "Starry Nights, Babur" was created as one of those fanciful ships. It seemed as if a heavy load on his shoulders fell off when Pirimqul Qodirov wrote it for the first time in 1972.

However, because of the pressure by the Soviet regime, the novel remained unpublished for another six years. Over these years Qodirov was just as lucky as carrying that load. Many responsible officials, senior academicians read that manuscript and expressed their opinions on it. Print issues could only be solved with the permission of the Central Administration. Writers and specialists read string line of the manuscript's translation in Moscow and gave written reviews.

Different opinions and comments have touched the thorns from the jungle and gone astray. The author always relied on the truth of history, especially, on "Boburnoma".

New reviewed opinions expressed in the novel for six years were targeted to make the novel more fuzzy correcting and deepening the history of the past.

In 1979, with Sharof Rashidov's help, the book was published as a novel. In 1981 the book was awarded the State Prize of the year. After adoption of independence much attention was paid to restore historical justice. And then it was possible for the good dreams to be fulfilled in our hearts.

Almost 50 years ago, during his student years, Qodirov was amazed at Babur Mirza because of his interest in the dynasty founded by Amir Temur. He was much fond of the fact that the great dynasty lasted for more than three hundred years on the Indian land and it amazed him a lot. Later when he read "Temur's Laws" he witnessed Temur's testament and traditions of great architecture. Babur also wanted to continue Temur's works and traditions. These peculiarities of Babur's personal character were mentioned in many historical events. He recognized mental and methodical closeness between Amir Temur and Babur when he read "Temur's Laws".

Chapters and paragraphs dedicated to heritage, historical, hereditary and creative closeness between Amir Temur and Babur have their importance in the novel. They were planned, enhanced

beforehand. Only after having passed dozens of years it took him much time to connect to the other events in the novel.

Finally, chapters and paragraphs not included to the previous editions of the novel were published in pages of daily journals. After having received public opinions on these chapters and paragraphs he set these chapters in the novel.

Evidential critical opinions about some abstractness and mistakes in the novel were expressed during some years. Expedition under the leadership of Zokirjon Mashrabov to the countries visited by Babur helped to discover new historical facts on this great personality.

A lot of famous and outstanding scholars and people were born in this area such as: Abu Rayhan Beruniy, Abu ali ibn Sino (Avicenna), Al-Farabi, Amir Temur (Tamerlane), Mir Alisher Navoiy, Zahiriddin Mohammad Babur, Muhammad Amin-Hoja Muqimi, Abdullah Qadiri and others.

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

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

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

We express our gratitude to Elise Brittain, English language specialist, for her invaluable assistance in reviewing the translation of this book. We look forward to the readers' comments on the quality of the translation.

We'll greatly appreciate it if you contact us and share your opinion at: [ilhom\\_tuhtasinov@mail.ru](mailto:ilhom_tuhtasinov@mail.ru)

**PART ONE**  
**THE SPRING UNDER THE LANDSLIP**  
**Kuva**  
**(DESTINIES ON THE EVE OF DANGER)**

I

It was the year 899 by the Hegira calendar...

The sultry summer sky of Fergana was swirling with heavy clouds; all day long the oppressive heat was blowing to the valley, and the heavy shower burst out by the evening. The Kuvasay river flowing between the red soiled hills became high-watered and crimson in a short time. Foam as red as blood covered the stream.

Under the branches of one of the weeping willows growing on the bank, a fellow and a girl concealed themselves from other people.

"Believe me, Robiya," the fellow whispered excitedly, "believe me as long as I'm alive, you'll face no trouble."

"God saves you, Takhir... But... Infinite number of enemies attacked our land. Who can stop them?.. Look there, refugees again... How many they are, miserable!.."

Takhir took his eyes from the girl. Along the other bank of the Kuvasay River the bogs overgrown with thick rush stretched. Over the river the long wooden bridge towered in an arch. Now it is scarcely shown up white through the net of ending rain. Like an ant chain, people, horses and sheep were crossing the bridge and highly loaded bullock cars were looming there.

The horde of enemies under the leadership of the lord of Samarqand attacked Margilan and these exhausted people were running away from the troubles of war. They were running via Kuva to Andijan saving their goods and chattels from robbery and their daughters and wives from violence.

"We are also fated to run!.." Robiya sighed deeply and added. "My mother hid my dower chest in the warehouse... And don't worry about me. This evening Makhmud is taking me to the Andijan tower."

Takhir imagined the Andijan tower. Well, if he let Makhmud bring his sister to that place, what will be next? Whether those self-willed and almighty beys are of less danger for the beautiful daughter of the potter?

"No!" Takhir raised his voice. "If you think of me, don't leave..."

A dagger was hanging on Takhir's belt which encompassed his wet homespun striped shirt. The youth was looking again and again at

the girl, into her eyes that were usually willful but now they were full of fear and alarm.

"I don't want to leave as well. But what should I do? It's dangerous here!.."

While running out from the house for the meeting with Takhir, the girl had thrown over her head her father's black woolen chakmon. Having been soaked with the rain it became very heavy and bulky. Robiya dropped it on her shoulders. The upper buttonhole of the collar of her dress came undone and Takhir unwillingly directed his eyes to the little white triangle. The green sleeveless jacket outlined the flexible slender waist and tight bosom of seventeen-year old Robiya.

Takhir grew up next to Robiya. Their families lived side by side since old times, but only now the fellow really understood the tenderness and beauty of Robiya and perhaps the eagerness of beys and hired servants for such kind of tender beauties.

In spring the parents arranged engagement of Takhir and Robiya but even at that moment it didn't seem to him that she was so beautiful!

As soon as Ramadan ended their wedding party would be organized. They both believed that soon they would be together, and they lived in a calm, untroubled condition given by anticipation of happiness. But it turned in a different way: the troublesome wind of war knocked at the gate of Kuva.

Suddenly Takhir grasped the girl. The chakmon<sup>1</sup> fell down on the ground and the fellow felt Robiya's trembling; she was trembling all over by each cell of her body.

"You haven't been so timid, Robiya," said Takhir, trying to control his emotion. "What has happened with you?"

"I had a bad dream, Takhirjan! Oh God don't let us be in trouble!"

"A bad dream?.. Was it about me? Well, tell me."

"I can't bring myself to say it"

"One can see a lot of things in one's dream... Tell me! Let chips fall where they may!.."

"A black bull raised you on its sharp-like-a-dagger horns... No! No!" the girl shrank away with horror. "It makes me feel creepy all over, when I remember it!"

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<sup>1</sup> Chakmon – caftan-type outerwear

Takhir believed dreams and an ill premonition was transmitted to him. He released Robiya from his arms.

"Tell me plainly, please... So, it raised me on its horns... and did you see blood too?"

"Yes, yes... The blood was jetting!"

Takhir sighed with relief.

"If it is so it's not a case to worry about. Blood is a good sign in a dream. My father always says it."

"God grant, that all will be as you've told! Takhir, I... If you don't go to Andijan... I won't as well. If anything bad happen, let it be here... together..."

The drops of rain were sieving through the branches of the willow. Sometimes the droplets were falling on the long eyelashes of the girl. It seemed to Takhir that it was Robiya who was crying. "Don't worry about me, Robiya. I'm a simple peasant. The sun will rise, the sky will be clear and I shall go out to the field with a pair of bulls. I'll harvest the corn. Who wants me? Who am I an enemy to? I don't care about enemies... I... I remember: you've got an aunt in Andijan tower. Go to her place! Go!"

"You have also a relative in Andijan!.. Shall we go together?"

Takhir became lost in his thoughts.

Indeed, Uncle Fazliddin lives in Andijan. He is an architect in the palace. He is also well known in Kuva. This wooden bridge over the river was built according to his plan. And when the Lord Umarshaikh liked decorated with patterns and blue ornamental tiles divanhona<sup>2</sup> created by Mullah Fazliddin, then his uncle became a very famous person! Umarshaikh gifted him a racer and a full purse of gold. Takhir heard for certain about it and that his uncle lived in solitude a comfortable life and not in the tower but in the country.

When Mullah Fazliddin lived in Kuva he taught Takhir to read and write. Now if his nephew comes to him seeking refuge... There's no doubt that his uncle can take him under his protection. But what will his old parents say about it? As Takhir is the only son they may not let him go. And he feels awkward about saying to his parents the true cause of his willingness to go to Andijan. Perhaps it's worth asking Makhmud, Robiya's elder brother, about it and let him hint to father?

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<sup>2</sup> Divankhona – here: reception room of the ruler.

- "Okay, Robiya, we'll go together to Andijan. But it will be very difficult to persuade my father... Is Makhmud at home?"
- "He went somewhere till iftar. He said he would be back. Why?"
- "Tell him to call on us; - I need to talk to him."
- "Okay, I'll tell."

Robiya hid her face on the broad chest of Takhir, clasped to her beloved saying the words: "God don't separate us!" she immediately shrank back and leaped out of the branches.

The rain was beating loudly against an empty copper jar left on the bank. Having looked at the jar, Robiya remembered that she was going to take some water there.

It is better to fill the jar and go home!

According to custom, bride and groom met secretly. When Robiya was far away from the bank, Takhir also left the shelter. Suddenly he recollected the bad dream of Robiya and his heart missed a beat from the foreboding of evil.

## II

The fast of this year concurred with the hottest summer days. One could eat and drink at night till the dawn while there were shining stars in the sky, but one couldn't even rinse one's mouth with water from the morning to the night before the first star appeared. It was distressful to bear the hunger and particularly thirst during the whole long hot day. People looked forward to the twilight, the evening pray.

Finally the voice of muezzin was heard from the minaret of Kuva madrassa. War goes its way but everybody needs to eat and drink and people forgot for a while about other things at the evening dastarkhan<sup>2</sup>.

Takhir and his parents were eating at the table. There was a smell of hot cookies and melon. Bread was tasty and mastava<sup>3</sup> poured with the sour milk was delicious. Takhir was slow in beginning a conversation about the departure for Andijan.

Somebody knocked with a handle of kamchi<sup>4</sup> at the gate. The old mutt lying at the ash hole barked raucously. Takhir jumped to his feet.

"Look out!" the father warned lowering his voice. "Ask who it is."

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<sup>2</sup> Dastarkhan – a table

<sup>3</sup> Mastava – the name of the rice soup with vegetables;

<sup>4</sup> Kamchi – a lash

The rain stopped but the sky was still overcast making the evening darker. Takhir came close to the gate.

"Who is it?" called he.

The cur was going to bark but the man behind the ash hole cried out loudly:

"Takhir, is it you? .. Open the gate! It's me, your uncle!"

"Just a moment, uncle Fazliddin!" Takhir turned around to the house. "Mom, it is uncle Fazliddin!" and he quickly untwined the chain on the lock of the gate.

Having gone out the gate the old man and the old woman greeted their relative for a long time in a dignified way. The two-wheeled covered bullock cart showed black not far away from the house. A man holding on to a shaft jumped adroitly off the saddle of the horse set to the cart.

"Whose is this cart?"

The man didn't answer. Mullah Fazliddin answered:

"It's mine, mine, my nephew. I've come to you with my goods and chattels."

"To us?" Takhir blew up from a surprise. Of course, it's joy that the uncle's arrived, but why on earth?.. He, Takhir, hoped to live in Andijan and if it is the uncle who came to live in their house, indeed he came with his bags and baggage, the road to Andijan is closed for Takhir now. But what will happen with Robiya then?

"Takhir, why are you standing and gaping? You get unloading the cart!" shouted mother. "Your uncle looks like he is suffering in the rain."

"Hey sister, the word "suffered" isn't enough to explain my condition! The cart was getting stuck in the mud all the time. It was dragging so slowly that it made me feel sick and tired of my life! Besides, it was a jam on the road – there were a number of refugees on it."

Takhir started to help the coachman to unload the cart. When he wanted to flatter the horse, he immediately felt his hand in the warm clay. The horse was covered with clay nearly till the withers. Oh, it was really a hard trip for the travelers... But why, why did they come to Kuva while all people are running to Andijan saving themselves from invasion?.. Takhir tried to get down the sack reached out by the coachman.

"Hey, hey, slowly, it's a very heavy thing. You'd better hold it together", said the uncle.

There was a small but really heavy iron box in the sack. Mullah Fazliddin ordered to have it made to the blacksmith of Kuva years ago. Neither water can soak it nor can fire burn it. Here the master saved his drawings. And there he kept also the fruits of another art - paintings! Mullah Fazliddin studied three years in Samarqand and four years in Herat. He learned there both the skills of architect and the secrets of depicting of the real body. In Herat there was a custom to decorate the manuscripts of stories about the battles not only with ornaments but with paintings as well, and the images of Alisher Navoi and Husein Baykara painted with the feather and paint of Bekhzad, brought fame to the artist. In Samarqand and all the more in Ferghana an image of the human face is strictly persecuted: Allah is the only creator of every living thing and mortals are forbidden to contest with the Almighty.

That is why Mullah Fazliddin kept his paintings in the iron chest. Nevertheless Takhir brought the sack alone in the house.

Mullah Fazliddin left his heavy red chakmon and wet high boots at the threshold. He put on galoshes, washed his face and hands at the edge of the covered hole for flowing water. Even the shirt under chakmon was wet through. Although the summer evening was damp it was very warm so Mullah Fazliddin didn't change his shirt.

It had been such a tiring journey for him that he didn't eat mastava. He ate two pieces of handalak<sup>5</sup> and drank several pialas<sup>6</sup> of tea. The coach-fellow who was also invited for the dinner, on the contrary ate mastava with sour milk with a great appetite and emptied two tureens. Then he went out to see the horse.

"Ah, Mullah Fazliddin!" began Takhir's father stroking his long gray beard, "it's a good thing you've come, it's very good. We should be together in such troublesome days!"

"Yes, I've arrived, but isn't it strange? Everybody is running away but I'm coming closer to the mortal danger," Mullah Fazliddin looked sadly at Takhir.

"There is a very serious reason for it, isn't it, uncle?" asked Takhir.

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<sup>5</sup> Handalak – a small honey melon

<sup>6</sup> Piala – a drinking bowl (as used in Central Asia)

"A reason? There is one reason my nephew: when a war bursts out they don't need any architect..."

"But weren't you supported by the sovereign?"

"Our sovereign is busy with strengthening of the fortress of Akhsı now. They say, that Tashkent khan Makhmud became an enemy and stirred up the troops against us. And Kashgar ruler Abubakir-duglat is going to Uzgent from the East".

Takhir's father caught in fear the color of his shirt with three fingers.

"Oh, God! An enemy is from Kashgar, another one is from Samarqand... Thus, the enemies are attacking from three sides? It's a predicament, isn't it Mullah Fazliddin? Aren't shahs and sultans failed to come to terms with each other to live in peace? And those ones are relatives indeed."

"Yes, our sovereign Umarshaikh is the son-in-law to the khan of Tashkent. And the sovereign of Tashkent the sultan Akhmad-mirza who is coming to us from looted Kokand, is a brother of our sovereign. To say more they two brothers were going to marry their children: the daughter of Samarqand ruler and our heir Babur-mirza have been affianced since they were 5 years old. So, it comes out that the brother is against his brother; father-in-law is going to draw a sword upon his son-in-law!

"Oh, Almighty! Maybe it is the end of the world, isn't it? Mullah Fazliddin, do you think the doomsday is approaching?"

"I don't know!.. I just know that they are fighting but all troubles and evil deeds are spread over the other people such as you and I..."

- "It's our fate then..."

- "Yes, it's a hard life when misfortune comes", Mullah Fazliddin went on talking as if he didn't hear his interlocutor. "I was full of hopes when I came back from Herat! I dreamed of building in the native Fergana as splendid madrasahs as they are in Samarqand and in Herat... Shahs, sultans... They are mortal. Ulughbek Madrasah, "Hamsa" by Navoi and alike them will be eternally in mind of human being!"

The architect said and as if he got frightened of the saying himself: he turned around quickly to the door. "He used to live among the courtiers and bewares of spies", understood Takhir.

"Talk freely uncle, we are alone here... Why couldn't you live in Andijan?

Mullah Fazliddin didn't reply at once. He was thinking about...

Yesterday during the evening praying hour, while Mullah Fazliddin was at the house of his friend, calligrapher, who lived on the next street, the unknown men broke into his house. They killed with an axe the dog that started barking at them, tired up the fellow (who has come today in Kuva as coachman) and gagged him. Then they made a real search at his house. They found the iron chest and began to break the lock with the axe.

The neighbors living on the left and right sides heard the disparate whine of the dying dog. They had foreboding. One of the neighbors went from his yard to the lane and in the shadow of a tree he made out a man holding the reins with four horses. He didn't make out the face of the man as it was covered with a black mask and only eyes were sparkling. Something like sounds of stroke and grinding were heard from the house of Fazliddin. The neighbor ran to the calligrapher.

Fazliddin came running just at the very same moment the strangers finally had broken the lock of the heavy chest. Having seen the host the two strangers immediately jumped through the window smashing the sash, the third one rushed to the door.

"Halt, rogue!" Shouted at him Mullah Fazliddin, but a strong as a bear fellow (he was in a mask too) pushed him away with his shoulder and rushed forward to the street. The thieves mounted the horses in a flash and disappeared in the darkness.

Mullah Fazliddin bent forward to the opened chest. In the dim light of the candle lit in the bay he noticed that the thieves managed to rummage about the chest: some drawings were rumpled, the purse of gold, the gift of the sovereign, disappeared of course. But Fazliddin didn't care about the gold at that moment. What about the secret compartment where the drawings were kept? Did they guess about it? God Almighty, did they reveal? He took out all the heap of papers and moved the smoothly polished iron square to the left and there, on the uncovered second bottom of the chest, one more lock appeared. Mullah Fazliddin looked around: there was nobody but him inside; the neighbor was untying the servant. Mullah Fazliddin took out a little key from his bosom and stuck it in the secret lock... He slowly raised the lid and there, in a thin folder were his drawings. He knew like his finger-tips the order of each drawing... The old gardener watering

plants... The hunting in the Chilmahram Mountains... Below there is an image of a beautiful girl, playing the changa.

... This is a daughter of Mirza Umarshaikh, Hanzoda-begim. When Mullah Fazliddin came back from Herat, he started his work with paintings in the country farmstead of Umarshaikh in Andijan. Hanzoda-begim found out that Mullah Fazliddin could paint and one day she asked to paint her. He had to do it secretly, because there are people who are ready to do anything in order to get fame of a defender of the Shariah and the sacred Hadises. Besides, her father surely would be against the daughter's venture and all the more, so he, an artist, the executor of the desire of the beautiful sovereign, would undoubtedly have been in trouble!..

The servant finally came to his senses and was less incoherent of the details of the robbery. Mullah Fazliddin compared his story and a story of the neighbor with all he had seen himself and made a conclusion that the strangers were not just simple thieves at all. What were they searching for in the house? Was it the drawings? But they didn't take them although the drawings were on the top. It means that they were looking for the paintings. So one could send them who knew about the ability of Mullah Fazliddin to paint pictures and who wanted to revenge him for an offence.

At that moment the architect remembered that in spring one of the most prominent and richest Andijan beys Hasan Yakub invited him and told swaggeringly: "I want to build a bathhouse which would be better than other people have! And I want to have the marble pools for summer swimming there..." Hasan Yakub lowered his voice and said: "I'll buy beautiful slaves: I have enough gold for it... And I'd like the following: while these girls are swimming in the pools, I will look all over them secretly through the little windows which should be hidden skillfully, is it clear?" the bey burst out laughing smugly and happily. "I've called you to suggest you building this bathhouse. I'm ready to pay any sum of money!"

Mullah Fazliddin believed in the holiness of architects' affairs. He couldn't conceal hostility and refused "profane building".

"What is profane with it?.. I'm building the bathhouse on my own money!"

"There are masters who have become skilled at building such "little windows", you'd better refer to them. As for me, our sovereign

ordered me to build a madrasah. And I'm occupied with the preparation of drawings for it... Let me take my leave!.."

Hasan Yakub looked with an unfavourable eye at Mullah Fazliddin:

"Okay!.. But let all I've said be left among us, sir architect. If not..."

"Oh, of course, our conversation has begun and finished here. And you will not take offence with me, will you sir bey?"

"You will not take offence with me".... Says you! The thick-necked Hasan Yakub took vengeance on him for the humiliation. Fifteen days passed from the day as it seemed to the architect he got away from one bey when another rich bey Ahmad Tanbal came to his house in the evening at twilight. Ahmad Tanbal being in private and without any witnesses took out of the pocket a little bag of gold...

"Mr. Architect please take this gold and paint a picture for me...

"What kind of picture?"

Ahmad Tanbal was over twenty five but still he had a hairless face. The beardless bey brought his thin lips closer to the ear of Mullah Fazliddin and whispered:

- "I need a picture of our begin!"

- "What begin?" asked suspiciously Mullah Fazliddin. "Honzoda-begin?"

- "When you were painting the rooms of our sovereign in the country farm you saw her at first time, didn't you? It was Honzoda-begin, wasn't she? She just keeps talking about your art..

The heart of Mullah Fazliddin began to beat as hard as if it was going to break. Could this beardless find out?

"Who told you this?.. I'm an architect... I can paint drawings of buildings, constructions...

"Don't conceal it from me, sir architect! I'm not a fakir who controls execution of the Shariah. I'm not among those who pursue people who paint creatures!.. Is it true that the walls of the palace built for Baysunkur-mirza by Grand shah Shahrur in Herat are decorated by images of beautiful girls? Is it true?"

"It's true, but... Every city has its own balance and weights. What will happen if our sovereign hears about an image of Hanzoda-begin? Have you ever thought about it?"

"Nobody will hear anything", whispered Ahmad Tanbal. "There is not any witness! You must agree, architect! Please, take this gold!"

"Be easy, bey... Who told you that I can paint people?"

"I heard it... people know..."

"From whom did you know? Is it from Hasan Yakub-bey?..."

"Hasan Yakub-bey found out from an old gardener..." "

"So, they are hand in glove," thought Mullah Fazliddin. "They want to get their hooks in me... Must I paint an image of our begim for this bare creep? No, I've not lost my head yet!"

"Mr. Ahmad-bey, when your most humble servant sketches the drawings of gardens on a sheet of paper, he may paint a modest gardener in one of the corners of this drawing: it's just an art of an architect and the Holy Koran doesn't forbid it. But painting of Hanzoda-begim is quite different thing! Oh no, I have neither right nor skill nor courage for it!"

"In short, are you going to refuse me? Me?!"

"Unfortunately I have no choice. I'm sorry... I suppose it's dangerous to come to see me with such a proposal! It's dangerous even for you!"

"I'm not among white-livered men!" Ahmad Tanbal angrily jumped to his feet. "But someone among yellow-bellies will be sorry for his cowardice!"

So, the robbery of the house by four strangers is the threat realized... It's impossible to resist intrigues of such bey like Ahmad Tanbal who, they say, has 200 cut-throats in his service! And he can't accept the situation and he can't take measures in reply because this madcap is able to play meaner tricks!

Next morning, after a sleepless night, Mullah Fazliddin saddled the horse which was gifted to him by Umarshaikh, and headed to the chamber of Andijan governor. The thin, tall governor listened to the architect with half an ear as it's called. Uzun Hasan's mind was full of thoughts about enlarging his army with as many people as possible and strengthening the town's defenses. Looking blankly at somewhere over the bent mullah, Uzun Hasan spoke carelessly:

"I'm sorry but now I'm busy with other affairs... Of course it's a pity to lose one's gold... But if they didn't take your drawings, these thieves are from suburban tugai<sup>7</sup>. There're shelters there. God permits, we'll finish successfully with the war affairs and then by all means we'll mop up the tugai from thieves and robbers... But right

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<sup>7</sup> A kind of desolate spot

now you see for yourself I'm very busy"… – and the governor made a helpless gesture.

Mullah Fazliddin came closer and bent his head with respect:

"I have another suspicion, sir governor," he uttered in a low voice. Then he told gently how Ahmad Tanbal had solicited him to give an image of a human or to order to paint one.

"An image? Whose image?" Inquired the governor.

"M-m-m... the image of a fairy-tale princess... I couldn't comprehend clearly of whose image..."

"Maybe you had images in your chest? You had images of princesses or plain girls, didn't you, sir architect?"

"How could they be there, sir governor? I'm occupied with the drawings of the madrasah, which was ordered to erect by our sovereign. I have no time and any talent for painting... And of course I have no wish, Right Worthy. There were some uncompleted drawings in the chest. There were only they!"

"Well, are they on their place?.. If they are still there, why do you suspect honorable Ahmad-bey?"

They stood one opposite another and kept silence for a moment.

"I told the truth of the robbery of my house, sir governor! I ask you to prosecute an inquiry!"

"I would like to remind you that Ahmad-bey is of sultan origin. The senior wife of our sovereign Fatima-sultan-begim is a relative of Ahmad Tanbal. By the way, today at the dawn by the call of Fatima-begim the honorable Ahmad-bey has left for the capital of our state, Akhsı."

"If this beardless has got the paintings from the chest he would surely send them to the sovereign, his sister, begim," this thought like a fire burnt the soul of mullah Fazliddin. "Does he need the image of Hanzoda-begim only for my ruining?.. Why not? He comes of sultan origin. He is still unmarried, but it's time to get married at his age. Thus, this "honorable bey" decided to become son-in-law for the sovereign and husband for the beautiful begim."

Mullah Fazliddin felt as if he was caught in a net and he had to break out!

"Sir Governor, here in Andijan I'm under your protection by the order of our merciful sovereign! If you do not punish the robbers, I'll have to address my request directly to the sovereign."

"Don't forget, sir architect, your words which you like to utter so much will reach the sovereign first."

"What kind of words, sir governor?"

"Someone... m-m-m... likes to speak approximately this way: "Not wearers of crowns are kept in minds of people, but poets, architects and painters." Someone speaks and some people listen... Friends of poets and architects may be and ours as well."

Thus, there are spies and squealers all around there. The most dangerous thing is to show one's fear! And Mullah Fazliddin said sharply:

"This is a complete slander! Sir Governor, I know a lot of "friends" of such sort who talk slanderously about you as well! You know perfectly about it... I immortalize the name of our sovereign Mirza Umarshaikh on writings of every monument I've ever built in Andijan! Look once more at the gate of the castle! Look at the rooms of the country estate! Is anywhere written my name? Thus the name of the sovereign not mine will remain in history – this is what I'm anxious about! Is it so or not? Tell me!"

Uzun Hasan was silent in embarrassment.

"And now you support a slander about me instead of protecting me from thieves and robbers! Good Heavens! I'll complain to the sovereign about you!..."

He shouldn't say these words because Uzun Hasan straightened himself up at once.

"Will you complain about me?" he lifted his head higher. "Well, you may go and complain about me! I'm not afraid of you. Now at the war time when we are surrounded by enemies from three sides, the sovereign, our state needs battle beys but not architects! For the sake of such men like Ahmad-bey and I, our sovereign will send away scores of people like you."

"We'll see who will be sent when we are in Akhsı," shouted Mullah Fazliddin being beside himself with anger.

He turned around sharply and left the reception with the look as if he was going immediately to go to Ahsı. When being at home he calmed down of course: because there was a bitter truth in the words of Hasan. By no means Mirza Umarshaikh will defend the architect. He can't (in such time!) go against beys with their soldiers. They are real soldiers and not peasants who were droved together into untrained militia. "And they aren't useless architects," smiled

ironically mullah. Thus, today Ahmad Tanbal will be in Ahsı, in the palace, and he will start talking at once everywhere that mullah Fazliddin has painted the image of the sovereign daughter... He would say, it's an outrage against the family! How could he secretly meet begin in summerhouse, sending away maidservants?! How could he depict a human being and one so prominent?! It's an outrage against Shariah, It's an outrage against family dignity of the sovereign!

Beat him with sticks or stones to death. Put him to torture and death who has disgraced the daughter of the sovereign!

Mullah Fazliddin realized completely what a dangerous affair he had done yielding to Hanzoda-begim's request. What a pleasure he felt when with brusher and feathers he was painting such a beauty; but even the owner of this beauty will suffer if other people see her image.

Mullah Fazliddin took out from the secret compartment the image of Hanzoda. Don't leave the evidence for the mean beys, destroy the image! Burn it to ashes!

The image was painted with the thinnest motions of brush and feather. An amazing girl looked from this painting, she looked as if she was alive and her long eyelashes hardly quivered in the fire light of hearth and her scarlet lips gave a pleasant smile. The beauty and charm of Hanzoda enchanted again the soul of the architect. "Do I really love this girl?" thought with joy and surprise Mullah Fazliddin. "Isn't it funny when a poor man falls in love with a daughter of a shah? And if then this poor man becomes a painter? No! I love my own work. It must be burnt. If I'm alive, I'll paint another like this one!"

He bent to throw the image to the fire but he couldn't do it. It seemed to him that the face of the painted girl writhed with pain and enveloped in flames. He shrank back from the hearth. How can one kill a living person, throw one's lover to the flame? Another voice shouted at him threateningly: "You're a coward! Coward! You're already ready for a crime before your enemies knock at your door! And don't dare lie to yourself: an image like this you'll never paint again! You were managed to depict not only her beauty, but tenderness of the begin, her amazement, and you can't have this inspired luck twice!.. If you are a man, you'll save her!"

Mullah Fazliddin hid the image again in the second bottom of the chest. He called his servant:

"Pack things and harness a horse immediately! We're leaving this place! Today! We're leaving right now!"

And now, at the house of his brother-in-law, talking of what has happened, mullah Fazliddin didn't tell even his relatives that he keeps the portrait of Hanzoda-begim in his chest. He didn't want to tell about this secret to anybody.

"Oh, fate, the fate-stepmother!" Sighed heavily the farther of Takhir. "You were our support and hope, mullah Fazliddin. And if even you have fallen into disgrace of fate... Can the sovereign help?"

"When the war ends and we win with God's help, I'll go to the sovereign. If he lends an attentive ear to my complaints, it'll be fine, if not, I'll leave for Herat again! I heard Alisher Navoi was going to build a clinic. Now in the world a glimmer of hope for architects left near Navoi."

"Well, Herat... Mullah Fazliddin, you're appreciated by many others not only in Herat. There are such people in Fergana. We, people of Kuva still speak well of you for your bridge."

"Enemies will cross the bridge tomorrow or the day after it! When I think about our misfortune I begin to feel sorry that the showers don't make a mud flow which could take away this bridge! I would be much pleased if the bridge is burnt to ashes to prevent the enemies' coming!"

"Indeed," suddenly thought Takhir who kept silent all that time, "the bridge is wooden; one can pour some oil and set it on fire. The enemies can cross only this bridge. There is no ford: there are bogs and rushes everywhere. If the wooden bridge is burned... Takhir began to feel sorry as if the bridge was already crackling in flames. Here is the shield that can save Robiya!" Takhir looked at his father and uncle. "Should I tell them? No! My father won't agree to run risks: I'm the only child.. My uncle is a man of science, it is better not to involve him. I must find faithful and venturesome fellows."

Takhir rose slowly and went to the yard, then outside the gate.

One could see rare stars through the breaks of still heavy clouds. Houses were without light. Silence was everywhere. Even the bark of a dog wasn't heard anywhere.

Makhmud also went to the lane at the time when Takhir was there. He began talking about his sister's departure:

"She will live in a castle. The Andijan castle is strong..."

"Well, it's not so strong," - Takhir stopped him and quickly retold all he had known from Mullah Fazliddin.

"Good Heavens, where can we find shelter then?"

"Die for your sake, orphan, nobody else will help you. Makhmud, do you remember this saying? Let's enter your yard. Can you keep a secret?" and he blurred out at once. "We'll set the bridge on fire and delay enemies this way, is it clear for you?"

At first Makhmud treated Takhir's undertaking with distrust. "The bridge is very big. Wood will not burn while it rains. There is a guard on the bridge."

"These guardsmen are posted by our beys. They will follow the beys to the castle, you'll see it! Nobody will be on our way and we'll fire the bridge at night! We'll pour oil on it and it'll catch fire."

"Don't be in a hurry! They say that our sovereign is coming with his troops from Ahsi. So, we need the bridge for our own forces!.."

"If the sovereign came to meet the Samarkand people, he would have been there a long time ago! But he isn't going to leave the castle... Even castles surrender. Marghilan has surrendered for instance. I say: you die for your sake."

"I don't know: Kadhuo persuaded that the sovereign was coming. "He is hurrying to help us out of trouble", that's what he said."

"I don't believe!"

"But I do!"

"But I don't!"

## **AKHSI (DEATH IS TRUE)**

### I

The Akhsi castle is built on high hills and it is like pointed rock which shows black at night. At the foot of the hills the Kasansay River runs into the Syrdarya; the sounds of waves of two tumultuous rivers fighting with each other and crashing against their banks are heard from the distance.

The sovereign of Fergana and Akhsi, Mirza Umarsheikh, spent this night with seventeen-year-old Karakuz-begim in a bedchamber of the harem.

There was a bed behind the silk curtain and the single lamp lit before it. Its dim light shook as if it trembled with fear of darkness which surrounded.

Until the dawn the silence in the castle was broken by a gentle plaintive melody of the surnay<sup>8</sup>. Then the roll of the drum joined it.

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<sup>8</sup> Surnay - a musical instrument of Central Asia

Any Muslim must keep the fast: both shah and servant equally listen to surnay and drum which sounds usher in the saharlik<sup>9</sup>.

The summer days are short. It's unpleasant to get up till day light appears. But one can do nothing to do: saharlik obliges to do it.

Karakuz-begim quietly slid off the bed. Umarshaikh tucked two pillows up at his sides. His strong arms were put out of the silk bedspread. He didn't move.

In a beautiful and spacious hall the table was set with great pomp for Umarshaikh. Yesterday after iftar<sup>10</sup> the sovereign asked all his three wives and children to come the next day saharlik. The first wife of mirza, Fatima-sultan, the second one Kutlug Nigar-khanum, the seventeen-years-old daughter Hanzoda-begim and ten-years-old son Mirza Jakhangir were already sitting. But until the sovereign comes here and tastes the food, nobody will touch it of course.

The carved doors leading from the hall to the inner rooms opened – small, graceful, beautiful Karakuz-begim went out. She greeted shyly the senior wives and added that she didn't dare wake up the sovereign.

The youth of Karakuz-begim, her shining beauty and shyness ("shyness? And it's not a secret that this girl now is the most favorite wife of mirza") awaked in a flash the dreaming jealousy of Fatima-sultan:

"You managed to make our Padishah sleep so tight why don't you dare awake him?"

Kutlug Nigor-khanum didn't like this provoking remark. Why did she say it? Worse, she did it at the presence of children?

"Oh Fatima-sultan, don't say so, Karakuz-begim is not guilty!" she said.

Hanzoda cast an inquiring look at her mother: "Is father guilty for all things?" He really behaves in a strange manner: the danger of war has aroused alarm of everybody, the enemies are approaching, but he is sleeping calmly and in all... he spends too much time in the harem. Karakuz and his daughter are almost of the same age. He ought to be ashamed!

Hanzoda feels that she will not be able to glance at her father when he comes.

"Let me leave, mother... saharlik... my maids and I ...

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<sup>9</sup> Breakfast early in the morning

<sup>10</sup> Iftar – eve of the religious holiday

"If your father asks you, what will we say? He may get offended! Wait..."

A woman-choshnagir entered the hall, bowed low and said dropping her voice:

"The stars are thinning out in the sky. The dawn is coming. Has the sovereign decided to miss saharlik?"

Does he leave a man be hungry and thirsty all hot summer day long? But who among the wives will dare disturb the sovereign?

Karakuz-begim, only she can do it. Mirza has spent with her the night in the bedchamber, so she is standing at the doors leading to him who is sleeping well. "She has leaned against the doorpost, this lecherous girl," thought Fatima-sultan. "Poor thing is timid", thought Kutlug Nigor-hanum. And choshnagir threw a pleading glance at Karakuz-begim and said:

"God will grant you a son as strong as Rustam, begim!.. You are our only hope."

Mirza Umarshaikh was sleeping well. Karakuz-begim took a golden candlestick, whisked behind the curtain; put the flaring candle on the wall bay. Now the light was falling on the face of mirza. But even the light didn't wake him up – yesterday evening Umarshaikh ate magjun. Some opium is added in this food.

Afraid of being impudent Karakuz-begim began speaking with mild but insistent voice:

"My sovereign... My sovereign!.. Wake up!"

The woman stood her knees at the bed, put her trembling hands on the man's broad hands, and sighed deeply. The bed smelt of roses – yesterday the rose infusion was spilled on the bed sheet. Karakuz-begim stood looking at the face of her husband for a long time. His lips were half opened, his pale face was calm. Is he a threatening Padishah? No, he was a handsome, strong man below forty. Her husband, her sovereign is a strong man – and he is in profound sleep. Darling, close man. The woman remembered the joy of last night – she got red all over. And she thought at that moment that love was something... something not durable. Now the enemies are coming to attack Ahsı and who knows what will be with them tomorrow? The heart of Karakuz-begim stood still as if it felt the coming death of Umarshaikh. She bent quickly and began kissing mirza: his eyes, lips, hands.

Umarshaikh started, woke up, sat on the bed: for a moment he looked sleepily at Karakuz-begim as if he tried to recognize her.

The big eyes of Karkuz-begim became more round with fear: she kissed her sleeping husband to wake him up! Will he accept this action as indecency?

"You?" mirza stretched himself and guessing the reason of fear of his wife, he burst out laughing.

Karakuz-begim sighed with relief.

"My sovereign the time of saharlik is coming to end."

"Your kisses are sweeter than the sweetest dishes. Come here..." "

"But they are," Karakuz pointed at the door, "they are waiting impatiently for you..."

Mirza Umarshaikh awoke completely and remembered concerns of the day. His eyebrows pursed up and he pushed aside his wife and got up...

He entered the hall covered with mattresses woven with gold – he was well dressed, serious, and ready to do something important. The precious pearls on his turban, golden embroidery on the belt was gleaming with air of importance as well. There were usual bows and common silence among women waiting his invitation. Who and what place would the wives take by his invitation. It was a very important and serous thing to do.

The enemies are invading Fergana valley from three sides; the danger is the fortress of Akhsy may be besieged. Mirza Umarshaikh solved the problem – he decided to reconcile his wives with each other. He wanted to show every wife enough attention. The oldest and the vainest was Fatima-sultan; mirza asked her to sit next to him. Her eyes began to shine with joy, she wanted to sit at the right hand, but he showed her the seat at his left hand. Then, to the right of him, to the most honourable place he invited Kutlug Nigor-hanum. He did it not without purpose: khanum is mother of the crown prince Muhannad Babur. Fatima-sultan screwed up her eyes angrily.

Shashlik<sup>11</sup> from saiga meat, fried partridges, other dishes – all these were served first to Umarshaikh then to Kutlug Nigor-hanum, and only then - to Fatima; freshest, mild, melting in the mouth meat seemed tasteless as slightly burnt food to Fatima-sultan.

They were not hungry (only a few hours passed from the evening meal), but everybody was eating, forcing oneself. Only

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<sup>11</sup> A kebab, pieces of mutton roasted on the spit

Karakuz-begim, who was sitting next to Kutlug Nigor-khanum, didn't touch meat, just eating cucumbers, handalyak<sup>12</sup> and she was drinking sherbet – yesterday she was tormented by thirst, this day she provided herself with enough water.

As the dawn became brighter the flame of candles grew dim more quickly. The time for morning azan came. Imam of the mosque sitting at the top of the minaret was waiting impatiently for bakavul<sup>13</sup> sign: it was better to postpone azan till the sovereign finished saharlik.

When they started tea drinking mirza could tell wives about the complicated state situation at that time.

Umarsheikh didn't even begin to talk, as the sound of azan was heard. Hanzoda-begim quickly put the piala on the table without drinking tea to the end.

"All parts of body must live in unity" – this is a precept of wise men. Fatima-sultan, Kutlug Nigor-hanum, my children, Hanzoda and Jahangir", mirza looked at each person named by him turn by turn, "each of you is a part of the whole family. I want you to respect and help each other in these difficult days. Hands are worth on their place, eyes are on theirs. If hands or eyes harm each other, they will harm to the whole body – and they will be punished!

Everybody understood at who these two arrows were shot. The chinks of Fatima-sultan's eye became narrower. Kutlug Nigor-hanum began thinking about her only child Babur, who was far away from his parents – in Andijan. The sovereign didn't call him by his name – why?

"My lord, your words are the precious pearls", said Nigor-hanum, and added: "If you permit me to ask..."

Umarshaikh nodded.

"The great danger of war came out. I fear for the crown prince, for Babur Mirza. And would fear less if he were here among us..."

"The Andijan fortress is firm. And it is impregnable while Mirza Babur is there. I have high hopes for him."

Khanum's request was rejected. Fatima-sultan drew her dozing son Jahangir and stroked his head. She wanted to show that fox who was happier among them: at least her son was near her, with his mother, but "the crown prince"...

"Mother of Mirza Babur thanks the sovereign for such flattering words about the son – crown prince," Nigor-khanum stopped for a

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<sup>12</sup> Kind of melon

<sup>13</sup> A servant

moment, "but... why?.. Teenager, who is below twelve..., in the battle field..."

"There are no reasons for anxiety, khanum. Our best beys look after him. He's young, but he must learn war skills. If I'm fated to die, let it be the military leader Babur who will take my place!"

The sovereign was approaching his thirty nine years of age and suddenly he began to talk of his death. The war is the reason! The women became sad. Honzoda-begim forgot of her latest feelings and looked at her father with sorrow. Umarshaikh went on speaking loudly, distinctly to make everyone understand well:

"If I depart from this life in the battlefield or because of other occasions, you must execute orders of Mirza Babur like own ones. Mirza Jahangir! Are you sleeping?"

The boy started, became alert and put his palms to his chest:

"I'm listening, Lord!.."

"You also must put in mind these words! Though Babur Mirza is only two years older than you, if he replaces me, you must become a faithful son for him."

"I'll do it, my Lord!"

The child didn't catch the important hidden sense of his father's words, but obedience had already become a habit with him. The elder wives were frightened - each one in her own degrees. The shining tears appeared in the eyes of Karakuz-begim (who didn't tear her eyes from husband). Umarshaikh noticed them and remembered the kisses of his wife at the dawn but this recollection did not please him. "She was kissing as if she was firewalling with the deceased," he thought. His recent words also seemed like a testament. The heart of Umarshaikh began to beat faster and warningly. "What is happening with me? Am I really listening to the wings of Azrael? No, no!"

Hanzoda-begim noticed the confused condition of her father. He needs help, her help!

"My sovereign, your daughter wishes God grants you longevity of Saadi Sheikh! Live long!"

"Let your wishes come true, daughter!" Mirza Umarshaikh felt as if he awoke from consternation, as if he realized for the first time how clever his daughter was, how she was beautiful. "Most of all I want to make your wedding party myself!"

Once, Hanzoda was asked to marry to the son of Samarqand ruler, Baysunkur Mirza. But Umarshaikh hasn't given yet the final

answer for this marriage. And now the war has broken out with the ruler of Samarqand. But if they have bad times, he will marry his daughter to the eldest son of his elder brother and with the help of this ancient means he will be able to establish peace. But Hanzoda also understood it and frightened at this possibility like she was afraid of darkness of night. She had another dreams. That was why she brought the conversation round to the previous subject.

"If there is no opportunity to invite my brother Babur to this place, let my mother and me leave for Andijan!" she suggested boldly.

"My daughter, you are the priceless pearl of my treasury. In these dangerous days I can't leave you without my protection!"

"In this case let me go alone, Lord!" Kutlug Nigor-khanum became animated again.

"Hey, khanum, don't be in a hurry! We're waiting for the herald from Marghilan. If it is possible, I'll let you go..."

Umarsheikh prayed in a quick manner and left the harem. His mind was already full of war problems.

Without any right to enter the harem, the bodyguards of mirza had been waiting all night outside. Not to disturb his sovereign from thinking properly, they followed him soundless and secretly in two steps behind him.

## II

The morning came. Bey-commanders and courtiers had been already gathered before the first light of the day. They greeted mirza with low bows in the meeting hall. The thick bearded prime vizier<sup>14</sup> put in woven with golden thread luxurious chapon and proper to his age and rank belt, stood right earlier than others did. And it was he who was asked by the sovereign where the heralds came from.

"From Isfara, Lord."

And he bent again in a low bow hiding his face.

"Well, what's news?"

"Lord, save your slave..."

"Well... so Isfara is also seized by enemies!"

Umarsheikh, feeling an unpleasant fever inside, asked about the heralds from Margilan.

"Lord, we're waiting for Margilan herald coming."

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<sup>14</sup> Vizier – an important Muslim official

Can Margilan resign itself as well? But in this case Andijan will be in danger! Why aren't the heralds coming? Are they caught into a trap, or caught in their way? But maybe Margilan people became traitors?

"Will our Lord order to send other heralds?"

"Are you going to look at the road waiting for heralds in return? How many days will we be waiting?"

The vizier bowed again and as if apologizing stepped backwards.

It was clear as daylight to mirza that they would not avoid a siege. He ordered to prepare food for six months. There wasn't any water in the fortress because it stood in the high hill. Mirza ordered to thirty year old Kasimbek, who was slim, quick in executing any order, to build one more water basin made of stones, to drive together water carriers and to fill it till its edges.

The beys saw that their sovereign had low spirits and began to execute his orders at once. Umarshaikh left the arch riding a horse with his cavalry suite.

The horsemen made their way to the pigeon-house which was standing on the high bank with its terrace overhanging the steep. The heralds sent from Akhsy went to the winds and mirza made his mind to put messenger-pigeons to use.

They set their hopes on birds trained to fly to Margilan and Kokand. They were brought, calmed. Then rolled letters were fixed to the inner side of the pigeons' wings. Mirza Umarshaikh liked throwing pigeons at the sky with his own hands. He carefully took a blue colored pigeon and rose by the wooden ladder up to the roof.

One could see very well all the neighborhood from this place. The sun was rising slowly from the far away mountains; a river was sparkling by the rays. Light breeze was blowing mildly like silk strokes on a face. Mirza didn't take his eyes for a long time from the strengthened fortress, from its foot crossed with the deep defensive moats. "These moats will be full of dead bodies of my enemies," thought Umarshaikh.

And neither he nor his people did know that the fast river stream slowly washed away the bank, washed away the stones from the foot of the hill, making light the foundation on which the pigeon-house was fixed. The pigeons felt danger. At nights they fluttered their wings uneasily in their beautiful clean cages. And now they didn't eat nourishing fodder and clean water but they were nervously pecking

the rods of the cages and were trying to escape. The pigeon keepers didn't understand the reasons of the birds' actions and shrugged their shoulders when the courtiers inquired about it. Only the blue pigeon, which was in Umarshaikh's hands, was calm.

Umarshaikh walked to the edge of the roof. He clasped for a moment the tender wing to his lips and whispered as if the pigeon could understand him: "Fly to Marghilan, my winged friend. Bring me good tidings – fly..." he leaned back all his body and threw his bird of hope at the blue sky. And at the very moment because of this slightest as it seemed push, the wooden top of the pigeon-house leaned and went down with a crack, and the washed away foundation could not prevent its ruining. The part of the bank was moving down, crumbling into the stream. From the top the back wall of the pigeon-house and roost collapsed – slowly at first, then faster, ruining on their way, raising dust and carrying along stout Umarshaikh into the abyss. His desperate cry mixed with the crash of falling roof timbers, planks, fragments of bricks, foamed river, - and the pigeon shooting through the dust cloud upwards to the sky was the last thing that he saw...

### III

The body was brought into the citadel and washed. The face hurt badly beyond any recognition was covered with a silk veil.

Karakuz-begim embracing Kutlug Nigor-khanum was crying bitterly in the hall where saharlik gathered all the family nearly two hours ago.

"I, I'm the reason of the death of our sovereign, oh khanum-aya! Why, why did I wake up our sovereign?! Oh, beshrew me, I am guilty for his death!"

Kutlug Nigor-khanum remembered how today mirza held conversation in a different way with them as if he was making a will, - she remembered it and burst out crying, too.

"Hey, how could he know of his coming death, how? What a conversation he held with us, what a conversation!"

Karakuz-begim, releasing herself of the khanum's embrace, sat rocking herself to and fro, and struck her head with her small fist.

"I deprived the unborn son of his father, oh khanum-aya," bitterly whispered she. "Only yesterday he knew about it and wished: 'Let it be son!' Son, son... Where is his father now? Where?.. Why, why I woke up my sovereign? I wish I were dead, I fell from that steep!"

"Don't tell so, my dear!.. You must live for your son. What for the steep?.. We are all at the edge of the steep! We all are being waited by a dangerous steep! Oh, my God!"

Isn't it strange, isn't it mysterious this unexpected death of a husband? Mirza Umarshaikh, the warlike sovereign, the courageous warrior, who had been in a lot of battlefields fighting with his drawn sword, but died because of the bank collapse. Is it an accident? Isn't it the sign of heavens? The state built by his forefathers, doesn't it look like construction erected on the edge of the steep? The county is being torn by internecine strifes... In an imagination of Kutlug Nigor-khanum she saw real like events. She was startled because she had a vision of her only son, beloved child, Babur. The life of his father rushed down from the steep to the all-absorbing stream. Will merciless waves take Babur away too?

"No, no! God, save him!.. I'll go, begin, I'll go," she apologized to Karakuz, "I'll send herald to Andijan! I must inform my child of his father's death for myself."

Faithful bey of the second wife of the dead sovereign would be able to hand the letter of depressed with grief and suspicious Kutlug Nigor-hanum to her mother Esan Davlat-begim, who lived with Babur in the country estate near Andijan.

At the same time when Kasimbek was handed the letter of hanum, sultan Ahmad Tanbal, who was secretly sent by Fatima-sultan to Andijan, had already crossed Sirdarya bridge and was far ahead of the second messenger. Not to burst upon the eye, he took a soldier with him and yesterday he arrived to Andijan with a suit of sixty horsemen. Today Fatima-sultan promised many, many things him. If Ahmad Tanbal manages to unite all her devoted beys, dethrone Babur and enthrone Jahangir then... Ahmad Tanbal had been among the second-rate beys for many years at the court of Umarshaikh. Now – he's had enough! If Jahangir mounts the throne, sultan Ahmad Tanbal will be the prime vizier. But when the sovereign is a boy... one who becomes the prime vizier becomes like a sovereign, isn't it so? And then he... we'll not pursue the image where Hanzoda-begim is depicted. He'll take Hanzoda-begim! To tell the truth, Ahmad Tanbal had only one sweetest dream in his life – to become the sovereign of the beauty.

He looked back to see his trace. The road was deserted.

Kasymbek left the fortress only in a few hours. Mirza Babur had also his supporters. They had to be also united and prepared for the struggle for the throne.

## ANDIJAN (FLOWER AND WHIRLWIND)

### I

It's still peaceful in Andijan.

The ordinal guard was put at the gates of a beautiful summer country estate surrounded by high walls.

"The war" has broken out behind the walls: twelve-year old Babur is learning war skills heatedly. He is galloping along the glade, now he has kept off a slack rein; he has quickly nocked and the arrow shot at full tilt. And a muffled sound has been heard: the arrow's stuck into the board serving as a shooting mark.

The group of horsemen is watching for the exercises of the crown prince from the shadow of a plane tree. Mazidbek was the first to come on his black horse to the shooting mark. He was bey-atka of Babur Mirza. When Babur came back his tutor turned to him and spoke intentionally with indifference.

"You took aim a bit higher," and he added at once as he noticed the boy got upset. "A little bit higher, but the shot was excellent!"

Mazidbek pulled the arrow out of the board and measured with his fingers the depth of its sticking into the wood and showed Babur:

"You have a lot of strength in your arms, my prince! A lion power! It was not in vain that our sovereign named you Babur."

The soldiers of Babur Mirza, his armour-bearers, and his friends of the same age, with whom he used to play games, also gathered around the shooting mark. They knew that Babur's bow was made especially for him taking into consideration his age and height. They praised him of course. But Babur also knew all these things.

"Call my father a lion-armed man. I saw myself: his arrows stuck ten times stronger than mine. And if he fights with his fists, no horseman will resist."

"That is the reason why your most humble servant wants to say that you are lion-armed because you take after your father!" Mazidbek skilfully brought the subject of conversation into the right way.

Babur smiled ironically. He wiped droplets of sweat from his large, slightly brown forehead, and upper lip.

"It's getting hot, my prince. One gets exhausted sooner during the summertime. You'll be tired till supper, I'm afraid. You should have some rest in the shadow. Your most humble servant is going to leave you - he must set things up for the defence of Andijan..."

Babur didn't like to have a rest. He wanted to move, to play tricks. His eyes shone mischievously as soon as Mazidbek had left. Babur stopped the horse, looked back and called a soldier. The soldier came up to him, Babur reached out his hand and tested a saddle on the bay horse with a star on its forehead: if it was fixed or not. The saddle was fixed toughly. Then Babur asked the soldier to ride fifty steps aside then dismount and pass him holding the reins of the horse.

The most authorized boy in Babur's boyish suite was sixteen-year old Nuyan Kukaldash who was fed with sister of Babur by a single mother. Guessing of intentions of Babur, Nuyan became worried.

"My prince, you've just finished doing one exercise. Maybe it's enough for you? And all the rest of the difficult exercises you'll leave for tomorrow?"

"Let it be so. But today - easy ones!" Babur burst out laughing and sharply cheered up his horse.

The horse quickly began to gallop and when Babur was about to reach the soldier who was going even, he released his feet from the stirrup, took kamchi<sup>15</sup> between his teeth, and as soon as his grey horse caught up with the bay one, he stretched himself and caught with both hands at the saddle of the bay horse and easily jumped off his.

The horse of the soldier got a scare from the jump and shied. Babur was in the air for a moment, then his feet hit the ground with noise. But the boy didn't unclasp his hands from the saddle (his arms were really strong!), kept hanging; the soldier rushed to the horse at once, stopped in a moment. Babur's legs furrowed half a circle along the earth; the silk turban fell off the head of the boy, but he stood his ground, stretched himself, - and the kamchi was still squeezed between his teeth! - Only his face grew pale. Nuyan rode to him, jumped off the horse, picked up the turban and wanted to hand it to Babur. But Babur didn't even glance at the dusty turban. He took kamchi and mounted the grey horse which was already brought to the master by the soldier.

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<sup>15</sup> A lash

Babur bit the horse with kamchi and rode between the trees, without paying attention to the way.

The road that was usually used by horsemen was along the edge of the garden. But Babur was riding fast along the path curving among the trees. As the horse jumped over the channels, his head was about to touch the big branches of apricot trees. But he always embraced tightly the neck of the horse, bent down – and galloped through. The apricots, which were shaken down by his shoulder, fell constantly into the water.

"Why didn't you hold the horse stronger, booby?!" anxious Nuyan shouted at the soldier. "Now the prince got offended by all of us! Everybody will be in trouble because of you."

Babur stopped his horse at a rich covered ayvan<sup>16</sup> in the middle of the garden.

The servant ran up to him to take the reins and stared with curiosity at the uncovered head of the horseman. Babur got red with an unpleasant look. Now his grandmother Esan Davlat-begim will see him as he is, she'll find out about what has happened; it goes without saying, that servants and soldiers will be punished, because it was she who has been charged by the sovereign of Fergana to cherish Babur as the apple of her eye and that's why the sovereign gave all the estate with all servants under her disposal.

The confidant boys and soldiers were coming with fear to the ayvan. And when Babur entered the room, they dismounted. Nuyan Kukandash cleaned the turban from dust and went holding it. Babur appeared with a hat – now grandmother would ask nothing. He looked over just coming persons. The soldier who hadn't kept in his hands the rein of the shied horse, rushed towards the legs of Babur to plead for forgiveness, but Babur got him up from his knees and set his face towards Nuyan Kukaldash. He was holding his turban so funny; he was bringing it so carefully as if it were a precious vessel. The confidants and soldiers were ready to meet anger, but they heard laughter. Babur was laughing with pleasure boyishly loud, throwing back his head. Nuyan Kukaldash looked at the turban and also burst out in laughter. The rest began to smile as if they relieved burden from their shoulders.

When Babur stopped laughing, he set the face of the soldier who held the shied horse towards him:

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<sup>16</sup> Ayvan – a big trestle bed (in Central Asia)

"You're guilty of nothing..."

When the soldier got such a present he slowly stepped aside bowing to Babur all the time. And then Babur addressed Nuyan:

"I wish my grandmother knew nothing about it."

"This wish is ours as well, my prince," cheered up Nuyan and winked slyly at their friends.

They all were boys. And everybody understood what the boyish secrets were.

And almost nobody liked lessons.

Babur remembered that that day he had a lesson with mudarris<sup>17</sup> and then his mood was spoiled again.

## II

The county house resembled a palace as there was splendid furniture, numerous decorations and carved ornaments on the doors there. But Babur was interested only in one room there. In spite of the fact that mudarris had been already waiting for him, Babur turned to that room – the room where his favourite books were kept. It seemed to him that gold-plated pages, velvet and leather covers kept the spirits of great poets. Babur knew by heart numerous poems of Firdousi, Saadi, Navoi. And then he took "Farhad and Shirin" and his thoughts took him away to Amir Alisher in Herat. The Andijan architect Mullah Fazliddin, who had studied in Herat, while building that country house, painted with gold ayvan and marble pool, used to tell Babur many amazing things about Mir Alisher. The architect brought an image of Navoi. It was a well known image made by popular Behzad. When the architect found out that Babur was interested in the great poet, he presented the boy with that copy.

Babur took out the image from a thick tome of "Farhad and Shirin" and put in his note-book for shariat lessons.

It was time to go to the lesson.

The aged man mudarris with thick eyebrows, white belly-long beard and big white turban on his head, was sitting on the mattress in the middle of the classroom. Mudarris began to explain laws of fiqh in Persian. Babur knew Arabic, Persian, could recite with pleasure many sooras of Koran, was interested in judicial laws; but at that moment the hazard sill raged in him, and mischief and reckless power was willing to appear in action. But he had to be still while listening to the

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<sup>17</sup> A teacher at the madrassah

uninteresting lesson. He thought: "Although why should I listen to it – I may pretend to listen to it, I just make a look of an attentive listener, but in reality, well, let's remember favorite poems about heroic deeds of Farhad..."

"Do you want to learn how to become courageous? Learn it from the courageous men!"

In order not to be noticed by mudarris, Babur carefully took the image out of the notebook. There was Navoi in a long black chakmon who stood leaning slightly on a thin staff and with his eyes shone kindness on the image. Babur asked mentally: "O great Amir, if I'm fated to be before you and... and if like Farkhad I win battles with all dragons and ill spirits in my life... will you give me then the key to the magic door of poetry?"

Mudarris stood up slowly from his place and came unexpectedly quickly up to Babur. The latter one hadn't time to hide the image.

"An image of a man?! – asked mudarris with a threatening voice. "Instead of listening to the lesson? Holly Koran and hadises forbid..."

"Mr. Mudarris, this image... was brought from Herat. You see, this is Great Mir Alisher."

Muddaris heard of Navoi's poetry, but he had never read it.

"Spreading images of breathers, oh my prince, - is the affair that pleases the Devil! Let me see this image, give me!"

Mudarris got so angry that he was able to tear the picture. Babur said: "No!" he said it so firmly that the teacher got scared of anger of the crown-prince. But he stopped the lesson and went out to complain to Esan Davlat-begim about Babur.

The portly woman of fifty five sailed into the class-hall rustling with her white silk dress. Babur quickly jumped up and bowed to his grandmother. Esan Davlat-begim took the ill-fated<sup>18</sup> image in her hand. She began to examine the image with curiosity.

"Now I can see that there are some angelic features on the face of Mir Alisher," she said to a great surprise of the teacher. And she added turning a little bit back hiding her face under the edge of her silk headscarf: "Honorable mudarris, this image was done by the permission of the religious of Herat."

"I'm sorry, sovereign," mudarris remained standing dropping his eyes at the doors. "I'm sorry but... They break the rules of shariat all

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<sup>18</sup> Ill fated- unfortunate

the time in Persia and Horasan. This is the influence of the evil shiahs, the movement which is hostile to our holly sunnis teaching. I would like to warn the crown-prince: The prophet Muhammad, blessed be his name, entrusted us with the true Muslim religion, and it was neither in Horasan, nor in Persia, but in Mavouranahr!"

Esan Davlat-begim didn't want to argue with mudarris especially about religion. She turned to Babur:

"Sir Mudarris is right, of course. It is improper to examine any pictures when you are on the lesson of fiqh, dear mirza. God permits, the times will come, when you begin to rule over the country. You must know fiqh from the beginning to its end. What for the image... I'll take it."

Babur asked his grandmother to give him the image just for a moment and put it into the book again.

"I hand you my dream," he said, stretching his hand with the book to Esan Davlat-begim.

Grandmother liked the words of her grandson.

"Maybe we'll invite Mir Alisher to our place, to Andijan?"

"Oh, is it possible?" the eyes of Babur lit up.

"Why not? Mirza Alisher has already honored Samarcand with his presence. But the merits of Fergana are well known in all over the world... I heard that Mir Alisher is an honest, devout, saint-like person. If he comes here, the honorable mudarris certainly will ascertain it."

The face of mudarris brightened up. He stood erect and uttered with self-importance: "May God's will will come true!..."

### III

At the midday the house became quiet. Everybody was exhausted by thirst and was looking forward to the evening. The noble people who had the big houses spent their time in cool rooms, and slept in order to avoid the sense of thirst and hunger.

Nothing could make Babur fall asleep. The poetic thoughts excited him very much. Having been left alone in his room, he took a feather and a piece of paper. He wanted to write his own poem, but nothing that came to his mind was his own. Then he took another notebook and began to write what he had known about Fergana valley: "There are the high ranges of mountains and a lot of games. We saw a white saiga in a desert places near Ahsı. They are also near Margilan." How beautiful the Fergana valley is! Describe all its

fascination, all its sights! People come not only with poems to Herat, to Mir Alisher...

Babur was so involved in his thoughts that he didn't hear the hoof beat. He heard it only when the horseman stopped at the gate of the house. In a few minutes he heard the bitter sobbing of women from some rooms of the quiet house. Babur started and tore himself away from the paper. "What's the matter? What has happened," he thought. The weeping was heard from Esan Davlat-begim's rooms. And it was growing louder! Babur rushed headlong with his big bounce towards his grandmother.

The doors were opened widely in her chamber. The headscarf slipped down off the head of the honorable woman. She was crumpling involuntarily the letter of her daughter Kutlug Nigorhanum reading and rereading it. Her eyes which were full of tears saw no letters.

The soldier, who had brought the news about Mirza Umarshekh's death, leaned against the wall, scarcely standing on his feet. He had been riding without any rest for almost eighty miles; he was covered with dust all over.

This news was like a snake which crept out of the rosebushes. Babur turned pale. He stood trembling looking at Kasimbek. Kasimbek with jerky movement knelt down before Babur. His voice was muffled and pleading and always interrupted.

"My Prince! God gives you power! Now you are our only defense! The enemies are coming from three sites!.. Your mother said... You must immediately go to Andijan and call devoted beys to the fortress!.."

Esan Davlat-begim realized that she couldn't tear herself from temporal affairs even at the time of grief there was no time for weeping. She told Kasimbek:

"Stand up... We thank you for your faithfulness. Go along with Mirza Babur. Everybody must leave the house and go to the fortress!"

Babur became numb. He dressed with difficulty then mounted keeping silent. He looked around: "These trees in blossom, this full with water marble pool built by father, - they also feel sorrow for the man who will never come to this place again. Seedlings of those pear trees were planted by Mirza Umarshaikh himself; one can see fruit in the trees, time will pass - the fruit will ripen; the man who planted these pear trees will never taste their fruit."

They were riding by cobbled road and Babur remembered his father again: "the stones were paved by his effort, by his order. The fortress, seen in the distance, was also built by him. But he has died now. No! No!" Babur felt with all his body that he would never see his father again and that the loss was irrevocable, and his tears overflowed from his eyes and finally dropped down preying on his soul and relieving it at the same time.

When they came closer to the fortress (Babur mechanically counted that there were eleven layers of the high walls and deep moats), five horsemen were riding towards them from its main gates. One bey with narrow eyes and Mongolian look was riding a bay horse in ahead (Babur knew him as his mother's relative). Sherim Tagoniy catching up with their suit and seeing Babur, dismounted. He hadn't tears in his eyes but he began to moan:

"I hasn't believed, I hasn't believed, oh my Amirzoda! So, is it the truth that we have lost our defender... Oh, merciless world!"

"Who told you?" asked Kasimbek. "This news must be kept in secret till the proper time."

Sherimbek grasped his collar:

"Mysterious are the ways of the Lord... One of my messenger-pigeons was flying and flying and disappeared suddenly. "Who shot it down?" thought I and went up to the roof. In a few minutes the pigeon flew back and grounded before me. I found a piece of paper under his wing. I took the paper and unrolled it and - there was the pitiful news! I don't know who wrote it, maybe the angels of heaven did it."

Sherimbek put his hand on a shoulder of Babur and coming closer to his face said quietly in a low voice:

"My Mirza, don't enter the fortress, it's dangerous."

These words were heard by Kasimbek as well. When Umarsheikh was alive Sherimbek couldn't deserve a high position and went around with offence and then he wanted to be the first to do Mirza Babur a service, to worm himself into his confidence in order to rise. Kasimbek understood it and told calmly:

"My Prince, you shouldn't be worried beforehand. We'd better enter the fortress as soon as possible and assemble beys there."

Sherimbek decided that it was impossible to talk with mounted Kasimbek while he was standing on the ground. He mounted and began to speak hardheartedly:

"You don't know yet what is happening, honorable Kasimbek! Your devoted beys surrendered Hodjent to the enemy! They surrendered Isfara! They surrendered Margilan!"

"Margilan?" Babur startled and with a shout asked to repeat. "When?"

"We have just known it! The enemies are like an autumn smoke that hangs low. They are coming to Kuva! Now it is the turn of Andijan city!.. Do you want your devoted beys to surrender both Andijan and Babur to the enemies? No! As long as I'm alive..."

Sherimbek rode towards Babur and took the reins of his horse:

"I'm your uncle, my prince, I'm devoted to you, let me take you away from this place!"

Babur didn't understand the words of Sherimbek. But his soul was depressed with grief, his body exhausted with thirst, at that time preferred being outdoors to remaining in the stuffy fortress. That was why Babur made no resistance. Kasimbek began to protest again:

"My prince, but your mother said quite different things..."

"Kutlug Nigor-khanum isn't a commander!" interrupted Sherimbek and went on insistently turning Babur's horse around.

But Kasimbek was also obstinate: He rode to Babur and put his hand on the neck of his horse:

"Your mother our sovereign will come to Andijan after the funeral. Tomorrow she will be here. Your grandmother also wants you to come to the fortress. Where will they find you then?"

Babur rallied a little. He asked Sherimbek:

"Well, where are we going?"

Sherimbek whispered in his ear:

"We'll go to Ala-Tau, to Osh. Maybe we'll go to Uzgen."

Babur didn't want to make a secret of his way for Kasimbek. He quietly informed him:

"We'll be at some place on the way to Osh. Say it to my mother."

"First of all I'm going to speak to the beys in the fortress, my prince! I'll find out their attitude of mind."

"You'd better meet my teacher, Hodja Abdullah."

"It will be done!"

Then Kasimbek turned his horse towards the fortress gates.

## IV

A thickset soldier was watching the argument through the merlons. When Kasimbek moved quickly to the gates, the soldier slowly went down from the upper-gates and walked to his master, Ahmad Tanbal...

There was a big bathhouse with a dome tiled with blocks in the middle of an apricot garden. In hot summer days Yakubbek, the owner of the garden, had rest in one of its rooms, decorated inside like a parlor in a palace. At the very moment Ahmad Tanbal was sitting down on the honorable place there.

He poured koumiss<sup>19</sup> from a big pumpkin into the piala with rose flowers, drank it, hummed, wiped his yellow mustache with his palm.

"God forgive me, today I've broken the fast," he said calmly. While I was coming here, because of the heat my tongue stuck to my palate. I was about to faint and fall from the horse."

"Today you may sin," Yakubbek smiled ironically. "What is required, that is justified... You've ventured a difficult task. If you are lucky and Mirza Jahangir succeeds to the throne, you'll become his attorney. You'll be the Prime Vizier, won't you?"

Ahmad Tanbal inwardly rejoiced with such a good future. The stout Yakubbek was smiling. There were no front teeth in his mouth, so the smile was more cheerful. But his eyes were giving a searching look: "I hope you won't forget my participation in this venture, will you?"

Ahmad Tanbal became alert:

"Sir bey, we both are of Mongol origin. The time has come to put an end to barlas<sup>20</sup> governing in Fergana. It's our turn to rule. I acknowledge you as the senior of our Mongol beys. If God permits and I become the vizier, you'll be then both for me, my only friend and advisor."

"Be performed the will of Allah!" said satisfied Yakub-bek and stroked his short beard.

Ahmad Tanbal put the piala aside and turning towards the door listened.

A soldier came and bowed low.

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<sup>19</sup> Fermented mare's milk

<sup>20</sup> One o the tribes of that time

"Suyunchi, master, suyunchi!" he said drawing himself up. "Mirza Babur didn't enter the fortress, but turned in the opposite direction."

- "Was he along with Sherimbek?"

- "Yes!"

That was really good news for Ahmad Tanbal. He pulled out a golden coin from his leather purse and threw it at the threshold. The thickset soldier raised the coin in a hurry and put it in his pocket at once. He bowed again thankfully. Then by the sign of Ahmad Tanbal he went out, closing the door tightly behind him.

When Ahmad Tanbal came to Andijan, he stayed at Yakub-bek's house at once. But it was not he whom he informed first about the death of Mirza Umarshaikh, but Sherimbek – a fussy and high-strung person. He was also simple-minded: he believed the pigeon which was sent by Ahmad Tanbal to remain unseen.

- "Your plan is succeeding!" Ahmad Tanbal told favorably to the master of the house.

- "Well, now Sherimbek "will avoid" him from troubles. He will do his best to become the closest bey to Babur; he will take him over Alatau, thank God..."

- "Meantime we... we now... we tell people about Babur's escape... just he's gone away from danger. Let them know how Babur left his native Andijan in such a difficult time. After this... then Jahongir Mirza will ascend the throne.

- Yakub-bek was stroking his beard again and again.

- "The most appropriate place for tittle-tattle is the bazaar," he said. "I have appropriate sellers, they will gossip."

- "Yes, but nobody must know that the rumors come from us!"

- "Don't worry, Mr. Ahmad-bek. We can keep secrets..."

The people of Andijan had already been anxious about some rumors – one more dreadful than the previous one. The news of Enemies troops coming kept people in fear, and where there is fear there is rumor. They whispered one to another that "the sovereign jumped into the river from the steep and enemies can capture the town at any moment." Then another rumor was spread: "Mirza Babur shrank in the face of danger, ran away leaving us in the lurch." When the trade was at its height, stall upon stall of the trade rows became to close in covered bazaars. Nobody knew exactly from where rumors came but people listened to them and retold adding new terrible

details. Finally they began to talk that the Ahsi fortress was seized and the sovereign was thrown from the steep. Secret informers hurried to come to the governor to tell him the news of the day.

Beys were in a panic: the news which Kasimbek had told about the death of the sovereign strengthened their fear of the enemies, and the forthcoming changes with the throne made them think about quite different things having no concern with the war. The head of the governor Uzun Hasan began to swim from the bustle of rumours: "They are absurd rumours, but who knows..."

The beys were gathering but took no measures.

"Happiness left us, gentlemen," complained the governor. "The enemies are out of walls, the bustle is in the fortress. We know nothing about how to act, we are ready for nothing. Thus not without reason Mirza Babur went away not even entering the fortress.

"Maybe it's worth running away for us as well?" asked with irony Mavlyan Abdullah.

Hodja Abdullah was famous for his black hair and good education. He was a powerful man among the beys of Andijan. Besides, Mirza Babur considered himself as his pupil. That was the reason why Uzun Hasan couldn't rudely respond to him. He said nothing.

"We must return Babur Mirza until he goes too far from Andijan," said Kasimbek.

"I understand Mirza Babur well enough." Hodja Abdullah looked at everybody. "Oh, no, he didn't escape with fear. He left us to taste your devotion to him. What for the rumours about bazaar – the challenge for revolt. And troublemakers have been challenging. From them the bazaar had heard before us about the death of the sovereign.

"Right, everything is right!" Uzun Hasan nearly surprised faithfully that Hodja Abdullah being there, among them, was guessing the thoughts of Mirza Babur. "He is a real prophet this Hodja!"

"Everything is clear for our Pir now!" said Uzun Hasan with genuine respect. Let's do as our mavlyana would say."

"I know it for sure," said Hodja Abdullah lowing his voice, "we all should unite and serve Mirza Babur, and we'll save this way – no man will touch a hair of our heads."

"Right, again - right. How confident Hodja Abdullah is speaking. However, it's strange... If everything comes like Hodja Abdullah tells and Babur becomes the sovereign of Fergana, what will be the result

of the governor presenting hesitation? If men of the governor tell Mirza about his hesitation, he might farewell to the post of governor? No, no. Uzun Hasan, you can't change your chosen way."

"My Pir, give me your blessing, I go by myself to Mirza Babur," said Uzun Hasan. "On behalf of all beys I will express faithfulness to him and invite him to the fortress!"

"Your intention would have earned praise, sir governor, but while you are the governor, I want to say, you should dispel revolt in the town, find and destroy the nest of the troublemakers, prepare Andijan for a defensive position. Only after these actions you'll get into favour with Mirza Babur."

- You have made another prophecy again, my Pir. We are going to start this job in no time!

## V

The summer sun burned the earth and the sky. The dust raised by hooves like tongues of flame licked the faces of the horsemen. There wasn't any breath of air.

Babur sweated blood with unbearable thirst; his mouth was dry like a desert. But yesterday at the same time he was luxuriating in cool air on the bank of Andijan-say. Fresh air of the summer house, clean water, blew with wind ayvan, carelessness, mischievous – seemed to be in the past, many-many days ago on the scorched, dusted road. Like an unexpected tornado in a hair-raising tale, tore him away from the happy life of a teenager, picked him up and is carrying him somewhere like a powerless chip. And the rising dust was the dust of that tornado. And the power that threw his father from the steep was the power of the same tornado. The dim dust-grey shadows of his fifty travelling companions- these were the shadows of the same tornado which was going to lead them to its terrifying embrace.

Head was spinning from hunger. It seemed that an evil demon was whirling them, leading them astray.

They reached Namazgoh by Uzgen road. One could see the mountains with snowy peaks. Babur felt cool with his eyes. He gave the horse a touch of his spurs. Having unstuck his lips with great effort, he addressed to Sherimbek:

"Quickly! Everybody move quickly!"

Sherimbek glanced back:

"A messenger is riding! Shall we wait?"

The messenger handed Babur a letter written by the hand of Hadja Abdullah. Babur took the rolled letter, tore the silk tape which girded it and reached out the opened scroll to Nuyan Kukaldash:

“Read!”

The letter was about the devotion of the beys of Andijan. And it was written with careful hints about the absurd rumours which were spreading in the town that “Mirza Babur escaped” and the troublemakers wanted to dispose the people against him.

“I’ve wanted to save you from those troublemakers, my prince!” said Sherimbek to Babur. “It’s a very bad situation there! Very bad! The fortress is their nest. Don’t go back, my prince. If the beys are devoted to you, they should come here!

“... ran away with fear, leaving father’s hometown,” – yes, such a rumour is worth passing from mouth to mouth, from town to town, from village to village.

“No! I’m not going to escape!” Babur turned his horse back.

“My Prince, this is a trap, believe me.”

“I’ll sort everything out myself. I’ll prove to them that I’m not a coward. All ride back! We are going back to Andijan!”

Babur loosened the reins and bit the horse with a lash. The horse galloped and the wind blew at Babur’s chest and made him feel a sense of relief. As if that furious tornado was behind, as if it vanished on the way.

They entered the fortress at sunset. The streets, which used to be noisy, that evening were quiet. The stalls of merchants were closed. There was some desolation all around. The people of the town were frightened, fear rose up in their hearts, and they shrank into their hovel.

Sherimbek was anxious about security of Babur who was riding ahead, so he gave the soldiers a sign to surround him. He began himself to outride him. Babur felt again being in captivity, in tornado’s embrace. Again he saw spinning horses and people before his eyes – chips in the whirling air column. And again Babur rushed forward, gave his horse a touch of his spurs, and tore himself away from the circle. Sherimbek tried to repeat the maneuver and to ride at least next to Babur, who would watch it – let them watch, but he would save his nephew from an evil eye, but Nuyan Kukaldash caught the reins of his horse:

"Sir, let the prince go ahead. Let people see the crown prince, let people calm down. Here they are at their windows; let them know about the slander of troublemakers!"

"But what will we do if the troublemakers shoot an arrow from any chink?"

"They will not dare!.. Prince wants so much to be ahead. God saves him."

The horsemen headed by Babur came to the ark<sup>21</sup>. The main gates of the citadel opened widely; Hodja Abdullah, Kasimbek, court commanders went out to meet them. They dismounted, Babur greeted his teacher. The heart of the teenager relieved and tears dropped down his cheeks. Hodja Abdullah clasped Babur to his breast to support and caress the boy. Yes he was just a boy. But he was a crown prince as well! All beys and servants were watching. Hodja Abdullah shed a few tears, but quickly braced his heart.

"There are no bounds of our grief, my prince," he said with restraint. "Now you are our only hope and defense!"

Somebody among the beys took two steps forward and loudly interrupted Hodja Abdullah:

"Prince, we, all beys are ready to serve you!"

The voice of Babur was still trembling when he said:

"Thank you!"

At the very moment everybody was entering in a crowd to the arch, and Yakub-bek joined the group of beys. Having heard of Babur's arrival he rushed here to reject any suspicion from him.

Earlier when the capital of the state was in Andijan, the throne was in the winter palace which was the heart of the fortress. When the capital was moved to Akhsı, this palace with marble stairs, golden murals began to lose its splendor step by step. By Hodja Abdullah's order the luxurious carpet strips were spread, the dais which served for the throne before, was also covered with splendid Turkmen carpets and soft mattresses were prepared in the hall for Babur's arrival.

Babur stepping along the purple carpet strip coughed as his throat was too dry. Without recovering his breath, he occupied the dais.

Everybody took his place. Hodja Abdullah prayed for the dead sovereign Mirza Umarshaikh.

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<sup>21</sup> Ark - the residence of ruler

"God, take his soul to paradise!" exclaimed beys all together. There was condolence and sorrow on the faces looking at Babur.

"Dear Sirs, pillars of the state" started to speak Hodja Adbdullah. "If there weren't war affairs, urgent affairs, we would hold the ceremonies of remembrance in prayer. In Ahsı the sovereign was buried according to his fame and high position, thus with great honour. But at this difficult time, when the enemies are at the gates of Andijan we must act differently: first of all we must immediately entrust the destiny of the state to the crown prince, our new sovereign..."

Yakub-bek was the first who took up these words:

"You've suggested us a wise step, my pir. We should immediately proclaim noble Mirza Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur the rightful sovereign of Fergana.

Babur cast a glance at Yakub-bek. Seized with thirst and anxiety the teenager liked everything: soft and resigned voice, excited look on the face, even a smile of a gap-toothed mouth. All knew that Yakub-bek was one of the most influential mogul beys. Among the sweetest dreams of Babur was also the following: I would like to succeed to the throne of father some day, to become a leader of all his beys, and like a true believer, warrior and man carry on victorious military operations against enemies. That moment came – father's gone, but sly Yakub-bek was mitigating the prince's grief. After the mogul other beys of different origin began to call him as the sovereign of Fergana, and his dream like a full moon was appearing through the black clouds, suddenly his heart began to beat with joy, but the troubles attacked him like a tornado, and physical pains which he beared seemed far away from him, - yes, he, Babur, would become a powerful sovereign, whose will would be the rule for numerous people.

He liked imagining himself as a military leader, as a great-grandfather, Amir Timur. Babur heard about his brutalities and didn't want to repeat them: "people should remember not pains, but amazement of military valour!" He was interested not in cruelties of his forefather, but in magnificent military victories. Moreover he liked his great power of will, imperious name which had been awesome for all self-willed beys.

At the doors Uzun Hasan appeared bowing with fidgety.

"My Prince! Don't punish your servant who couldn't meet you himself. I was busy with a vigilant hunt for the troublemakers who are

spreading false absurd rumours in Andijan. Now I've brought their leader."

Babur startled:

"A leader? Who is he? Take him here!"

Everybody looked at the doors. Yakub-bek got pale. Was that the truth that Ahmad Tanbal caught? If it was so, their secret would be revealed then! He let his eyes rove in embarrassment along the walls. A little window was too small and far from the place where the stout bey was sitting. No, one could not escape from that place!

At the moment a rich bass was heard behind the doors:

"Untie my hands, I'm not guilty!"

"Thank God" rejoiced Yakub-bek, "this is not the voice of Ahmad Tanbal."

Two soldiers brought the stout and tall man into the hall.

"Ouch, dervish Gov!" exclaimed Yakub-bek and many other beys exclaimed after him.

That man was a leader of Andijan mirabs, and he kept his broad neck forward arched like a mull, that was the reason why he was called "gov" – "a mull". He was called "dervish" because of his constant readiness to support any poor man: "God pleases them," said Gov. Though nine arylks supplied with water the Andijan arch, in summer there wasn't enough water because of the watering of numerous gardens. Beys tried to force out the "ragamuffins" from the queue for water. But dervish Gov boldly took poor men side. "You, bey, are bey for yourself," used to say Gov, "we all are equal before God!" And common people said yes to him. But beys hated him. Especially it was Uzun Hasan who had deep-seated rancour and hated him.

Dervish Gov with his tied hands behind his back first bowed Babur then Hodja Abdulla who was sitting at some distance.

"Be fair with me, prince!" he said with dignity."I'm not a troublemaker, honourable Pir!.. A soldier told me in the bazaar: The sovereign being drunk fell down from the steep and died but Mirza Babur being afraid of enemies ran away to Ala Tau".

"This is a slander!" Babur flushed with anger.

"Then I know that this is the slander. Nobody heard from me what I'd known from the soldier. Prince, spare my life!" Dervish Gov took a few steps forward and kneeled: "I know it for sure that this is a slander, you have a noble face and it doesn't look like a face of a coward. In the bazaar when people were scatting and locking their

stalls with fear, I confess that I felt embarrassment. I didn't spread gossips; I just stopped a man and asked him if he had heard about it. He answered affirmatively. Then I asked if it was true and at that moment the spies of the governor caught me...

"No, you are lying that you've asked him again! You were caught while you were spreading false rumours!" exclaimed Uzun Hasan.

"Bring me Koran and I'll swear on that holly book!"

"And then this criminal wants to touch Koran?!" screamed out Yakub-bek turning his outraged face to Babur. "O my prince, if this ungodly person were a devoted slave of yours he would have caught and took that soldier, who as he says was spreading absurd rumours, to the governor!"

"Oh my God!" the only words said Gov in reply.

Yakub-bek again softly looked at Babur and twisted his gap-toothed mouth.

"My prince! Your blessed father put Gov at the head of mirabs... Because he was in high favour with your father, I repeat... And now he is spreading gossips that our sovereign, be his soul in paradise, fell down from the steep drunk! What a liberty!"Child is easy to deceive," thought Yakub-bek catching with hope Babur's eyes kindled with offence and anger.

"But he himself, as a matter of fact, confesses that he's passed false rumor! Asked again or passed – Is there any difference, telling the truth?" asked tensely Mazidbek.

"If he is taken at his tongue, he must be punished!" Ali Dustbek took the site of accusers too.

Kasimbek for some reason remembered the story of the bey about a mystery pigeon which took the uncle of Babur the news about the death of the sovereign.

"Maybe it's better to conduct an additional investigation?" asked Kasimbek.

Mazid opposed him.

"We have no time for a long inquiry. Enemies are at the gates, pir said it once. And at war time, one who spreads panic, who is the cause of prejudice to the dignity of the sovereign, is also an enemy. You shouldn't have mercy on him!"

"As a warning for others, punish him in public in the square! To teach others not to gossip anymore!" put in his speech Uzun Hasan.

"To punish in the square" meant to cut off a head.

The shadow of death touched the face of Gov. He crept up on his knees closer to Babur, and burst out sobbing:

"My prince, I'm not a criminal! I'm a victim of criminals! Spare my life! I have five children! Don't deprive them of their support, o prince!" The hands of Gov were tied behind his back and his tears were falling down on his beard of graying hair.

Weeping of the grownup man suddenly put out the rage of Babur, and he gave an inquiring look to his teacher, Hodja Abdullah. He was eager to hear: "Have mercy on this poor man."

However Hodja Abdullah kept silent. And the beys did not calm down.

"A man, who has got five children, could have held his tongue!" began to laugh with evil Yakub-bek.

"Oh, this Gov is the worst troublemaker!" Uzun Hasan lifted his hands in dismay. "Well, why didn't you muzzle him who had said that our sovereign was drunk and died because of his foolishness... or didn't take him to us!"

The entreaties of dervish Gov were drowning in these cries:

"My sovereign, be faire with me! I'm a devoted man of your father!.. Oh you still don't know these beys! They are taking revenge on me! Don't believe these beys, my prince! Ask other men! All honest people know me!"

Ali Dustbek half-raised and pointed to mirab:

"Aren't beys honest? Have you heard it, sovereign? Do you see how black the soul of this dervish is?"

Yakub-bek bowed to Babur and rumbled:

"This Gov is going to raise all common people against beys, sovereign!"

"He has bad intentions! Bad!" cried Uzun Hasan and addressed to the soldiers: "It's enough of him, take him away from here!"

The guards rushed to Gov and took him from the floor and dragged the mirab with force, with pushes and blows towards the doors. Gov went on crying:

"I'm not guilty! The tears of my children will fall on you, beys! My innocent blood will kill you!"

This curse pierced the heart of Babur like a sharp thorn. Suddenly he remembered his light-hearted morning, when his peers and he were riding horses. It was in reality: he was examining the portrait of Alisher Navoi and was being lost in his sweet reverie! It

seemed to him seven years had passed since that time... Yes, this morning, today till the midday, his life was pure like a sunny sky. Where did those clouds come from?.. Each bloodthirsty bey demanded execution of dervish Gov and each of them was like a heavy cloud which covered the sun from Babur. Merciless tornado, evil wind and tornado that lead to hard breathing, and terrifying guess that power and throne were thirsty for blood of those like dervish Gov racked preyed on Babur's mind.

He heard cries:

"Cut off the head of this ungodly person!"

"Execute him! The policy requires the policy!"

Babur still saw the Gov's tears running down his grayish beard. "Must this man, such a lively, strong man become a corpse? And must he, Babur let them kill him? Why? Is it because all beys think so?"

"But maybe the beys really tell Babur lies. Maybe such beys pushed his father from the steep. And maybe tomorrow or the day after tomorrow they will attempt the life of Babur himself?"

"Teacher!" Babur addressed faintly Hodja Abdullah.

The last one leaned to the shoulder of Babur:

"You should hold your own, my prince!"

"What should I do, tell me!" whispered Babur.

"You must pass a sentence upon him. Beys are demanding execution."

"What about you, teacher?"

"What does Gov mean at this time, when Andijan and whole Ferghana are upon the death?"

"My Prince, Hodja Abdullah began to whisper too. "You can't go against beys in such a difficult situation. Make an order... You must execute him..."

Next day Dervish Gov was executed at the roll of drums in the square before the arch.

At nightfall of the day of execution Ahmad Tanbal went secretly to Ahsı.

**KUVA**  
**(PENALTY OF COURAGE)**  
**I**

Mullah Fazliddin came to Andijan for a day and came back to Kuva in great anxiety.

He went to the new sovereign, Babur to ask his protection. He was sure that he would receive such a protection, but his main task was to meet the young mirza. The architect knew Babur, he often talked with him while the country estate was under construction, knew that the crowned teenager had a brilliant memory for poems and liked poesy. He liked painting as well, that was the reason why the architect gifted him a portrait of the great Navoi. Then grateful Babur put on Mullah Fazliddin a chapon woven with gold threads. That time Mullah Fazliddin was going to tell Babur about injustice that was done by arbitrary beys and Babur of course would heed his request and defend him...

The architect wasn't allowed to see Babur!

Uzun Hasan and Yakub-bek didn't allow.

The first one directed him to the other one, to Yakub-bek. The richest and the most smooth-tongued bey gave a larger amount of money for Andijan defense, than others, and just to be on the safe side, he had more soldiers by him than others had, and every time he emphasized his devotion to Babur doing it more forcefully and more skillfully than others. All these were taken into account and Yakubbek became the Prime Vizier, the trustee. And that was the reason why he let himself reject the request of Mullah Fazliddin of seeing the young mirza in order to talk about "architecture in the state":

"Now our young sovereign needs not architects but soldiers, as many as possible well-trained soldiers! Come after the end of the war!"

And when passing the architect who was standing with a respectful half-bow, he added stinging remark:

"It's over there, where one can sign up to be a soldier. Go there. Will you become a soldier?"

"If we are alive, we'll see the time when architects will be wanted!" Mullah Fazliddin said after the bey.

It wasn't safe for Mullah Fazliddin to stay at the fortress where Yakub-bek and Uzun Hasan lorded it over: Mullah Fazliddin found out

how and why Gov died. That was the reason why the architect came back to the sister's house, in Kuva...

His nephew, sister, brother-in-law, and all people of Kuva were waiting with alarm for the approaching of the enemy's troops who has already set signal fires in a crossing from the bridge over Kuvasay, in Karkidons.

The architect wanted to hide the chest again...

"Do you have an empty hole for wheat keeping?" he asked his sister and her husband.

"Yes, we do."

"Where is Takhir?"

"He's gone with Makhmud somewhere... Well, we'll manage to do it without him."

They put the iron chest into the sack again and bottomed it into the empty hole, covered the hole with some planking on which they put armfuls of clover which made rather a high stack.

## II

The sky was covered with dark clouds again. The sparse but big drops of rain began to fall. They were heralds of a shower.

Kuva is quiet and empty of people. All people are in their houses and if dogs hadn't barked from time to time, one would have thought that all Kuva went away somewhere.

It is both quiet and empty on the bridge over Kuvasay too. Takhir was right: the guard has scattered.

In the middle of the night some shadows appeared on the road leading to the bridge. Then one more shadow appeared on the road.

"Have you taken a flint and kindling wood?" Takhir tried to speak with a muffled voice.

"Yes, I have." A short man with a jar on his shoulders answered in whisper.

The clothes of the short man smelt of sesame oil, he was an oil presser.

Takhir felt the drops of rain on his forehead and cheek and looked upwards. He saw the clouds gathering: there wasn't seen a star in the sky.

"It's going to rain heavily. The fire will not set up," thought Takhir. "Perhaps the bridge is already wet."

"Umurzak, I've taken an axe with me. We need one more axe and a big two-handled saw. You're a carpenter, so you have all these instruments."

"What do we need a saw for?"

"Don't ask, we're wasting time... Makhmud, go with him. Hurry up, brothers.

Everything was ready soon.

They reached the bridge. Of course, Takhir wasn't the only person, who knew that the guard at the bridge had run away to Andijan. The enemies also knew and that was the reason why they had to be in a hurry. Enemies could go across the bridge the previous day.

Takhir stopped his companions at the high tree, which was growing before the bridge.

"We have nothing to lose, brothers. Beys and soldiers left us to face the hooves of enemies' horses. I repeat again: "die for your own sake, orphan", there is such a saying. But in case we are lucky, our relatives and we will get rid of a great trouble: It's very difficult to build a bridge over such a wide river like Kuvasay... But if we accidentally have the bad luck... we should keep silent. No matter what will happen we all should keep silent."

"Let's swear an oath!", resolutely said Makhmud. "If any of us reveals the secret to the enemies, then let he... let him betray his own mother!"

It was the worst curse, the dirtiest shame.

"Let it be!"

"Let it be!"

They all passed their palms over their faces and went up to the bridge one by one.

Takhir was going to take forty or fifty steps and set a fire nearly at the middle of the bridge. The farther they went more helpless they felt. The water from both sides of the bridge made it lighter than the bank. They could be seen.

They could become the target for a Bowman from advanced detachment of the enemy. In addition to their entire difficult situation, the saw of the carpenter struck against the axe of Takhir. It struck sharply and loudly. The fellows startled, stopped, listened to the sounds of the night, waited for a moment. It was good that frogs, thousands of frogs, kept on croaking.

"Takhir, let's not go further," whispered Makhmud." If they come from there, how will we run away, have you thought about it?"

"One of us must cross the bridge. Well, let it be Umurzak who will go to the other side of the bank and will be a watchman there... Don't be afraid, they are far away from here."

It started raining more heavily. The mantle of rain covered all fires that were seen from the distance. So enemies wouldn't be able to notice them.

The bridge was long, and it stood on three piers. Takhir bent over the rail and looked down: At that point he saw the first support of the bridge and stopped everybody but Umurzak, who went on going to the place where he was to be a watchman. Takhir manned and ordered to trim with axes the upper layers of the wet wood and quickly pour the oil from the jar on the dry wood. Takhir began to make a fire himself trying to cover tinder from the rain. After several unsuccessful attempts the tinder was on fire and a bitter smell reached the nose. The oil presser was more nimble; he fired a splinter. Takhir put the fire on the oakum which he had been carrying under his arm all the way. A slack fire slowly spread along the wood bridge floor, but the wind blew and the rain drops put it out with a faint hissing.

"The oil is good-for-nothing, it isn't burning!" Makhmud swore.

"Because it's raining, said the oil-presser justifying himself, "You should be thankful that I've found this one."

"Silence!" whispered Takhir. "Let the oakum smoulder."

Takhir quickly joined two belts, tied up them tightly, tied one end of the plait round his waist, and fixed tightly the other end of to the rail. He leaned over the rail and hanged. He found with his foot the pier and stood on a cross bar. He put the kindling on this dry cross bar, poured some oil and set fire to it. The kindling quickly was on fire but it also quickly burned down. And the wind dispersed the sparks over the water.

Takhir rushed to the top of the bridge took the axe and began to cut the rail like mad.

"Take it, if you don't burn! Take it, and it!"

The oil-presser took the second axe and began to destroy the rail from the other side.

"Hey, wait, Takhir, what is the use of it?" cried Makhmud. "Let me take the axe. Look, these boards are nailed. We will tear off the nails and throw the boards away."

Maybe it is the way out? One can hardly see the nails here, but Makhmud is a carpenter, so he found them by touch. Finally they tore off a big board that crossed the bridge. But they lacked force to tear the second one.

"Use the saw, brother!" said Makhmud.

They began to saw up the cross bridge floor.

"Don't hurry!" said Takhir. "It's all the same... If we make a hole in breadth of five or six boards, it will be useless."

"Why? We'll make such hole which would prevent horses and carts!"

"Any carpenter can repair the bridge in jig time. Do you really think that they haven't carpenters?"

"It seems to me, we've got down to a bad job!" confessed dolefully the fellow-oil-presser.

Makhmud got angry:

"Well, listen ... Let's saw up the beams!"

"They are whole trunks – are you joking? They are as thick as bulls. We aren't able to saw them up!"

"We'll be able to do it!" Takhir also inspirited.

So, two couples of fellows began in turn to saw up the cross-beams of the bridge. It was still spitting steadily with warm rain; the sweat of the workers mixed with it – their clothes got wet at last. The sawyers wanted to saw up the beams in several places, to cut their joint spots. They didn't understand that if they had realized their plan, all of them with boards and beams would have fallen into the rapid Kuvasay. But the bridge didn't crash down as they had expected. It was still kept by some nails, beams and surrounded tension bars. Takhir and Makhmud again took the axes. One part of the bridge suddenly began to crack, sagged a little, but still stood as before.

"That'll do!" said Makhmud utterly exhausted. "This big bridge is too large for us!"

"Oh, damn this bridge!" - exclaimed Takhir and again began to destroy the rail. And at this moment Umurzak came running from the other side of the bridge:

"Finish it! Don't make so much noise! It looks like the enemies are coming."

"Have you seen it?"

"I've heard voices: "Mount!", "Fall in!"...it means that they soon will be here!"

"Don't hurry to scoot, take a saw. Don't leave anything here!" Takhir said in an imperious tone and threw the rest of the kindling, and debris of boards into the water.

Five fellows who were failed, depressed and tired for the night went home.

A day was breaking in the east.

### III

The enemy's troop went forward after saharlik. The advanced detachment marched onto the bridge when there was a dusk morning mist. The shower passed not here but in the mountains that was why the water of the Kuvasay River rose highly and flowed fast and quickly. The horsemen of the advanced detachment easily crossed the bridge; they were a few and they walked in a chain.

The files of following columns were going closed up in full-width of the bridge. The soldiers were carrying robbed loads on the carriages pulled by camels. Horsemen, pedestrians, carts, camels – all these looked like a black torrent which was filling the bridge in the smoking mist, at reflected light of the dawn.

And the pier, where the fellows of Kuva had worked at night, cracked to its end. At the same time a horse's front leg of one of the horsemen fell into the crack between the boards. The horse tried to pull out its leg, neighed, began to stir. The soldier, from the suddenness crashed down from the saddle on the bridge, straight under the hooves of the following horses. The horses were frightened by the sound of the crashing bridge-floor in front of them, and by the heartrending cry of the fallen horseman. They jibbed, lost the step, and broke the ranks.

The back troop went forward and forward pressing them. The blockage stopped movement which led to growing in weight those who were rising to the bridge. The bridge crashed down with a great noise; horses, people, carts, beams and boards became the prey of the river which had almost risen till the cross-beams.

Those who remained on the bridge tried to move backwards; but the troop behind pressed them still, moving forward by the order of the uninformed commander. The people came into each other and

fell down – the disparate cries were the signs of the new victims. The number of people falling into the flood increased because of lack of rail in some parts of the bridge. Loaded carts running into each other blocked the movement, then they were taken aside, - and when they broke the remains of the rail, they fell down with a great noise. Someone tried to use kamchi<sup>22</sup> to clear the way for himself, some beys reached for their swords to stop panic, but the avalanche of falling people grabbed them into the water.

The blockage was getting denser. The victims were increasing.

The governor of Samarqand was told about the situation on the bridge. Sultan Ahmad sent the soldiers from his own guard to go and save those whose bodies were being carried away by the river. This was one more mistake. The soldiers cutting the walls of rushes came close to the bank and began to sink into the bog. Now they had to be saved: some were saved with ropes; many men were absorbed by the bog.

It also took those who having fallen from the bridge but knowing to swim well overcame the flood and reached the wrong boggy bank. The flood and the bog like fairytale monsters ate people, horses, and camels. The cries of the drowning people mixed with the cries of those disappearing in the bog. There were a lot of killed, trampled people on the bridge itself.

During two-three hours the troop of Samarqand governor, Sultan Ahmad, lost more than during all the time from the beginning of the war up to this moment. Besides, nobody knew the reason of this accident; it was naturally that then they began to speak about the punishment of God's right hand, that God came down to the side of Ferghana...

#### IV

People of Kuva, from the top of their roofs and massive walls saw enemy warriors dying on the bridge – from morning till afternoon. Many Kuva people prayed inwardly for Allah to prolong his anger, others mourned over young dzhigits<sup>23</sup> drowning in the river, coming down the bog!

Last evening Takhir alluded to his hike to the bridge, and at the dawn he said that they hadn't managed to complete their undertaking.

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<sup>22</sup> A lash

<sup>23</sup> Dzighits- skilled horsemen

But when Mulla Fazliddin from the roof of his house saw what was happening on the bridge, the first thing he did after coming downstairs was call Takhir with a sign to the corner of the yard:

– “Tell your friends that you all need to hide immediately.”

– “Why, uncle?”

– “The bridge broke on the place where you sawed the cross-beams. Even if you had set the bridge on fire, the enemies wouldn’t have incurred such losses! They would’ve repaired it and moved further. But now, after getting into this trap, it’s not hard to understand that it’s been fixed, and fixed so bad. They’ll repair the bridge, come here and kill all of you! Together with us!”

– “Are they still on the other side of the river?”

– “The patrol crossed the river, I saw it. Don’t waste time speaking, act now! Hide in tugai. Hurry, hurry up.”

Takhir told his friends about his uncle’s advice:

– “Take a lasso and a sickle. If anybody asks you on the road tell him that you, well, have gone to get firewood. Take food for two-three days.”

The five young men trying not to be caught in anyone’s sight, left the kishlak<sup>24</sup> one by one. They met in tugai, which were almost impassable.

Meanwhile the enemy patrol found the headman and using him sent all the Kuva carpenters to repair the bridge. Novkers<sup>25</sup> gave logs and boards from the other side of the river.

There was Takhir’s father among those who went to repair work. He knew that his son had left for somewhere at night and returned home tired at the dawn. One carpenter showed his father the marks left after a saw, but he put his finger on his lips and asked to keep silence:

– “Don’t tell a word about it! If they find out they’ll burn Kuva today. And we’ll lose our heads!”

– “You are right.”

The carpenters didn’t say anything during the two days while repairing the bridge.

Enemy warriors cautiously crossed the bridge, Sultan Ahmad with his guards were the last ones to cross, and without making stop at Kuva they moved further.

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<sup>24</sup> Kishlak- a village

<sup>25</sup> Soldiers

Heavy loads on the wagons, camels and part of the forces stayed on the other side of the river: it was obvious, that for the last two days something in the plans of the enemy had changed.

Takhir couldn't find a place in tugai<sup>26</sup>: he was worried about Robiya. He knew that her parents hid their daughter as surely as possible, but who knows how things will turn out, when enemy sentries and sleuths are everywhere. Besides, the food came to an end on the third day. They had to make up their minds to visit their houses. In the evening Takhir prepared a large fag of cane brushwood, loaded it and left for home. He came to his house. The gates were closed on a chain, he shoved his palm into a crack in it which was only familiar to him and released the chain. In the yard twilight he discerned Mulla Fazliddin who was standing in front of a shed and was inspecting the wheels of a wagon. Having noticed Takhir carrying a cane on his shoulders the architect advanced to meet him and raised his hands:

- "Peace, my nephew! Peace! Congratulations!"
- "Is the war over?"
- "Allah be praised, it's over!"

Takhir threw the fag down. Uncle clasped Takhir to his bosom and whispered:

- "Your bravery wasn't wasted, Takhirdjan! They say that the Samarqandian himself proposed peace. Having lost so many warriors in Kuvasai he grew wiser. Afraid of Allah's fury", - stroking the shoulder of his nephew he continued: - "It ended good, great! Many wise beks couldn't do anything with the enemies, but hot young men like you repulsed them. Dehkhans<sup>27</sup>, craftsmen, carpenters... who else..."

- "Creamers."

- "Yes, a creamer!" - Mullah<sup>28</sup> Fazliddin laughed loudly and gaily, released his embrace and looked at his nephew's face admiringly. - "Farmers, craftsmen... well, people like you are called a black bone by haughty beks, but who would have saved them from problems, if not you? Who?"

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<sup>26</sup> Tugai- shrubs along the banks of the rivers

<sup>27</sup> Dehkhans- the peasants

<sup>28</sup> Mulla- a priest

– “We didn’t think everything would turn out so good, uncle. And it’s very good that you’ve come. It wouldn’t have come to my mind without you.”

– “Ha, there how you turned everything! You praised me as well!”

Mulla Fazliddin kept speaking heatedly, quickly, first raising his voice and then lowering it, as if there were still some danger.

– “Uncle, are they still in Kuva?” – Takhir asked.

– “Yes. Forces are still coming, there are still guards. Their master made peace when being sixteen miles from Samarqand, and he returned. Part of his guards has already crossed the river, I saw it. No matter if without him or with him – others are about to come here. We still should be careful, Takhirdjan. Enemy is most dangerous when retreating. Go inside the house. Don’t show your face to people!”

Takhir shook the stick straws off him, and entered the house; from the next house – it could be heard that a child was being sung lullabies. Takhir began to think of Robiya at once, and his heart pounded faster. Oh, how he missed her! He wished to jump over the massive wall to the neighbor yard right now. He wanted to tell Robiya that the war was over, - she probably didn’t know about peace, - he wanted to see her happiness! But no way, he would never do such a thing; he would meet Robiya secretly and face to face.

But he had scarcely entered the house and congratulated his parents with peace when dogs’ barking, the sound of clattering and knocking at the gates came from outside. Must hide!

Takhir with his hand on the handle of his dagger rushed through the ayvan<sup>29</sup> and hid in a secret place covered by fags of dried cane.

Somebody was banging at the gate roughly. They had to open it. Horsemen warriors in helmets with bows on their saddles and wide trousers falling on their boots, entered the yard. Two of them were riding one black horse. They looked around silently as if not seeing the hosts.

Centurion – he had a small green flag on top of his helmet – saw a bareback horse under shed. Then he turned to those two on the black horse:

– “There – it’s for you.”

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<sup>29</sup> Ayvan- a terrace, a veranda, a shed

The man, black as a Negro, with a shaggy moustache, jumped down and ran to the shed. Others went inside the house. They began to bring large felt mats, carpets, some sacks outside.

Mulla Fazliddin leaned to the ayvan column and watched motionlessly what was going on. At first he thought that the warriors were looking for Takhir. He was scared. But they were ordinary robbers. Hateful and mean. Takhir's parents kept silence perplexedly. Having lost patience, Mulla Fazliddin spoke:

– “Hey, mister centurion”, - the centurion stayed on horseback in the middle of the yard. – “Have you no shame? After our masters made peace such a robbery doesn't agree with Muslim laws!”

The black guy saddled the horse of Mulla Fazliddin quickly. He laughed:

– “Yes, right, peace.” – And added with a jeer: – “Truly wish you peace and welfare!”

Another one turned over the sack with clothes, pulled a piece of atlas out of it and gave it to the centurion.

– “Moli amon.”<sup>30</sup> – he said.

The centurion, staring at Mulla Fazliddin, put idly the cloth into his weathercock, and began to speak slowly; stressing with his accent that he was from Samarqand:

– “Sixty horses of ours died. This is the misfortune! You ride a horse, and my warrior has to walk to Samarqand on foot, you think? You saw that two warriors were riding one horse.”

– “I saw. Take it, if you think that this jade is able to take a brave warrior to Samarqand. It is for a bullock-cart, not for a saddle! But raking about women's sacks? Is it worth of such a noble centurion?”

– “Hey, our wives ordered us to bring Ferghana atlas for them. We had a very long and problematic road on the way here and now what, we must return with nothing? Do you think it'd be merited?”

The centurion even rose on his stirrups; it looked like he was really angry. He was dissatisfied about the war having ended without victory, and so without large loot, they've shed their blood and withstood all severities of the campaign. Andijan and Akhsi remained safe, and after this tragedy on Kuva bridge peace had been made, so what have they come to? The Samarqand ruler received gold, silver, precious cloth, racehorses and camels. All these fell to him and his retainers – beks, advisors, officials and the warriors from his personal

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<sup>30</sup> Amon - an indemnity

guard. And the warriors like him, centurion, stayed without real loot, not taking into account the one they got from poor kishlaks they met on the way.

Five robbers like them, from the same division, rushed into the yard of Robiya's parents. One of the walls of the shed where Takhir hid was a joint with the shed of neighbors. He could hear the turmoil raising there.

Robiya was hiding somewhere in the female part of the house, but as ill luck would have it, at this moment she went outside to milk a cow - she already knew about the peace. She let the calf to the cow in order to coax it, and busy with this she noticed the warriors rushing into the yard too late.

Mother hurried up to the cattle-shed:

- "Ah, God damns it, are you still here?"
- "What's happened, mother?"
- "Enemies! Stay still! Don't go to the yard! There, climb through the upper window into the barn."

Two warriors showed up at the doors of the cattle-shed: they were looking for horses. Narrow-eyed kipchak<sup>31</sup> noticed the female figure.

- "Looks cute!"
- "No horses", - his fellow said with sorrow.
- "A cute girl is better than a horse. Hey, freeze!" - He shouted to Robiya. - "We'll take her to Samarqand and sell to Fazylbek."

Mother ran up to them and blocked the stile with her body.

- "If you are Muslims, you won't touch my daughter! Kill me if you wish! Don't come near my daughter! She's betrothed! She belongs to one kind boy!"

These words made the narrow-eyes mad. «Girl», «betrothed», - so, they'll pay more for such a girl! With one fast movement he pushed mother away from the stile. When falling she hit her head on the feeding-trout and lost consciousness.

The man entered the shed, but Robiya had already run to the yard from another side of the shed. And she got straight to the second rascal. The first one hurried to them. They began to tie her arms up. The third one took a long sack from his saddle, opened it and approached to the resistant girl as if aiming. The girl realized that they

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<sup>31</sup> Kipchak - people from the Middle Ages who spoke Turkic

were about to throw the sack up on her head and began to yell of all her might and call for help.

Takhir kept silence and tolerated the robbing at his yard. But Robiya's yell forced him to forget caution. He rushed out of the shed, climbed the massive wall between his and his neighbor's house immediately. From top of it he saw the situation: one warrior was holding Robiya's legs, another one – her hands bent behind her back, and the third one was about to put the sack on her head. Takhir yelled furiously and jumped down. One against five – the fourth one was holding horses, and the fifth one was on the horse with a pike – but he didn't think about it. He had only one thought – not to let them take Robiya. Running to them he pulled his dagger out of his sheath.

– "Hey, freeze! Don't move, I order!" – The warrior with a pike moved his horse.

But Takhir crossed the yard in two jumps. He ran to those fighting at the shed, and dug the dagger into the side of the narrow-eyed, who was holding Robiya's legs, pulled the weapon back and here felt a strong hit at his shoulder, he heard the pike tearing his clothes. Takhir became unsteady and fell on the dead body of the narrow-eyed. He had time to hear the heart-rending cry of the girl:

– "Takhir-aka!" – But the cry seemed to come from a distance.

He was left on the ground in blood and Robiya was tied and taken away.

## OSH LOOKING FOR THE WAY OUT I

For a few days the rapid life had remained at the outskirts of Osh, in this intricate joint of high rocks and flat green valleys. Magnificent tents brought from Andijan on camels were placed at the foothill of Baratag along Djannat-aryk<sup>32</sup> River. Hundreds of tents stood along the banks of Akbuvsaray too. Excellent fat-tail sheep brought from the mountains were slaughtered, pistachio-tree coal was glowing in braziers, it was necessary for cooking the best shish-kebabs; meat was boiling in massive cast-iron coppers.

They were waiting for Babur.

And among the officials there was Mulla Fazliddin. This day his further life was to be determined.

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<sup>32</sup> Aryk - a paradisiacal river

Yakub-bek, who became the first vizier owing to his craftiness, hadn't given Mulla Fazliddin access to Babur for a long time. Yakub-bek was caught on a conspiracy for benefit of Djahangir – he was given up by Ahmad Tanbal. Being afraid of punishment Yakub-bek ran away from Andijan. Warriors led by Kasymbek chased him all day long, and caught him finally and killed him in a skirmish on the bank of Syrdarya. Kasymbek was appointed a vizier, and mulla Fazliddin was allowed to Mirza Babur.

Ferghana state didn't have enough money for building large houses, including medreses, sketches of which he had made following the order of the late Umarshaikh. Fortuneless war took everything; Babur said and ordered Mulla Fazliddin to build a small hujra<sup>33</sup> with a terrace in Osh on the highest rock which supported the city from outskirts. There would be a nice view from top of it. Months have passed, hujra had already been built a long time ago, but Babur decided to come here for the first time as he'd been too busy before. If he liked it, then Mulla Fazliddin would have perspectives for accomplishment of much bigger ideas of his. But what if it did not suit his taste? Mulla Fazliddin was worried very much. Hujra had to be shown to Babur in the best possible way!

Together with master's servants the architect went downstairs and chose suitable carpets and mattresses. Servants, who were not used to climbing such a steep slope, had been exhausted by the time they reached the place. A stout butler (he only carried one narrow-necked silver jug from Kashgar) stopped every ten steps to have a rest. Mulla Fazliddin sparing him took the jug and helped the butler to walk by holding his hand.

The butler spread bright carpet paths along the stairs of the terrace, but Mulla Fazliddin asked him to take them away: stone mosaic picturing flowers looked much better than any carpet.

From the edge of the mountain the Osh city and its suburbs were clearly visible. Still breathing hard the butler looked down and jumped on his feet at once:

– “Here they are, they have arrived!”

Mulla Fazliddin came to the edge of the terrace and looked down too.

Babur escorted by beks, retinue and personal guards approached the foot of the mountain on a white horse. The second

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<sup>33</sup> Hujra - a cell, a closet

group was led by a cart horsed with three horses. Who was there? The cavalcade stopped in front of tents placed for the young mirza on the bank of Djannat-aryk. The tents with silver tent-pegs were full of valuable silk clothes, broadclothes, and carpets. They were assigned for feasts and rest, and Mulla Fazliddin thought that the young mirza would spend that day in tents and the next day he would visit the hujra. But less than an hour later a bearded kurchibashi<sup>34</sup> escorted by four warriors, climbed the mountain breathing hard.

– “The master will arrive here soon. Where is palanquin?”

The head of servants as if asking for help turned to Mulla Fazliddin. Having lapped over a blue chapan<sup>35</sup>, Mulla Fazliddin crossed his arms on his chest in front of kurchibashi.

– “I’m sorry, mister bek”, - he said.

– “Well?”

– “We made an experiment: it’s impossible to raise palanquin on this rock. We even brought bricks here by pieces, walking one after another. But palanquin requires four carriers.”

Kurchibashi looked through the place thoroughly: the mountain was steep on three sides and only one side had a narrow path – it was small even for one person, let alone four. Turning to one of the servants he said:

– “All right. But no unwanted person must be here!”

A narrow path went straight towards the building where massive stones behind a small flat area were. It was a good idea to place oftobachi<sup>36</sup> there when Mirza would come.

– “Mister architect, you know the road very well, so go and meet the master”, - kurchibashi ordered.

Of course, kurchibashi had to come down on his own and return with Mirza Babur. However it was beyond one’s strength to climb up such a steep mountain twice. And kurchibashi sent Mulla Fazliddin escorted by two warriors, and sat on a smooth stone and began to wipe his thick neck wet with excessive sweat.

Mulla Fazliddin was used to climbing up and down the Baratag several times a day. Light slinky boots helped to keep steadiness while jumping from one stone to another just like on stairs. With the

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<sup>34</sup> Kurchibashi - a leader of the securities

<sup>35</sup> Chapan - the national gown

<sup>36</sup> Oftobachi - a slave who gives a washstand

familiar quickness the architect reached the foot of the mountain being both excited and afraid of the forthcoming meeting.

Mirza Babur with his retinue examined the mountain's eastern side, came to its southern side and dismounted. The second group followed the first one - women went separately from beks. Kutlug Nigor-hanum, the mother of Babur wearing white clothes was riding a meek black horse. Hanzoda-begim dressed up in dark red kabo<sup>37</sup> was riding a fast horse with a mane the color of almond. Mulla Fazliddin recognized her at once, by her light, confident and graceful seat; his heart began pounding fast, and to his previous uneasiness another one added. Burning excitement filled him, and the architect could hardly hide it, when he came to Mirza Babur and his escort. A few steps from him he stopped, and began to bow hiding his eyes and clasping his arms to his bosom.

Mirza Babur's elder sister, Hanzoda-begim<sup>38</sup> had stricken Mulla Fazliddin with her singularity many a time. Four years ago, when Fazliddin returned from Herat and began to build a country estate for Umarshaikh in Andijan, Hanzoda-begim had only turned sixteen. Hanzoda-begim, the most beautiful girl of all noble girls, once dressed up as a boy, climbed on a saddle and together with boys from retinue played chovgan<sup>39</sup> and played very well! After a time Mulla Fazliddin was called to Andijan ark for the renewal of paint in some spots on the palace walls. That time he saw seventeen year old Hanzoda-begim among girls playing changa<sup>40</sup>. The naughty girl who was master in chovgan, now was playing a tender, high-pitch, difficult melody on the changa, and she also looked so tender and wonderful that Mulla Fazliddin fell into a reverie, and seemed to be completely in the grip of her charm.

Another case aroused much amazement in Fazliddin. He was drawing a draft pattern on the wall of palace, and at this time Hanzoda-begim approached and began to watch him working with interest. Mulla Fazliddin was so nervous that he dropped his pair of compasses.

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<sup>37</sup> Kabo - outerwear

<sup>38</sup> Begim - my lady

<sup>39</sup> Chovgan - a game played on horses/ like polo

<sup>40</sup> Changa - stringed musical instrument

– “You have painted an amazing pattern, but it seems that I put an evil eye on you, mavlyana”<sup>41</sup>, – She said taking the blame of this awkwardness on herself.

Mulla Fazliddin, picking up his compasses from the floor, said:

– “No, begin, on the contrary: the pattern, that you look at, becomes more beautiful.”

– “I heard them say that you, mavlyana, are an artist too.”

– “Well, an architect should be familiar with painting, begin.”

– “In this case, try to paint my picture, mavlyana!”

What an unexpected suggestion! Mulla Fazliddin looked around.

Though they were alone in that palace room, he lowered his voice:

– “I’d like to do it with all my heart. But...”

– “Don’t worry, I can keep secrets!”

– “What if for the picture painted by me... they’ll take my soul in the world beyond, then where shall I get it from, after having lost it in this world, begin? I’m losing it, begin.”

Hanzoda-begin understood the double meaning of his words, smiled fascinatingly:

– “If they demand your soul because of my picture, tell me, and I’ll give mine!”

The picture that was kept by him on the bottom of an iron chest, he ventured to paint it after those cunningly attractive and so wonderful words.

In the turmoil of wartime and during the first months after the end of the war he didn’t have a chance to meet Hanzoda-begin.

And finally that autumn Hanzoda-begin came to him on Baratag herself. Leaving for campaign Babur ordered his elder sister and mother to watch the building in Osh. In the month of meson<sup>2</sup> Hanzoda-begin paid a visit to Osh city. And Baratag was in the outskirts of the city.

At that time Mulla Fazliddin was working with his only student. Each brick, each board, each jug was delivered with great difficulties from downstairs. They did not have a stonemason for preparation of marble plates. They didn’t have money to buy tiles. All those shortages tormented Mulla Fazliddin. But how could he tell a girl about that? To tell about bricks to a being who was an embodiment of tenderness,

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<sup>41</sup> Mavlyana - the master

<sup>2</sup> Meson – a month from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September till the 21<sup>st</sup> of October

<sup>3</sup> Toki – a silk pointed woman hat

starting from silk head-dress, toki<sup>3</sup>, decorated with pearls, up to red boots with toes bent up. She was a fragile and perfect, heavenly beauty? The astonished architect could not bring himself to say that.

Hanzoda-begin asked Mulla Fazliddin for the sketches of the future dwelling-place.

– “You want to tile the dome with glazed tiles, don’t you? Do you have a sufficient amount of them?” – She asked looking at the paper.

Now Mulla Fazliddin had to speak about his needs. Wow, that girl was familiar with architecture too! How many books had she read?

– “Mirza Babur returns victoriously and he’ll accomplish father’s dreams”, – Hanzoda-begin said firmly. – “We’ll build a lot and you will be the one to lead constructions, mavlyana!”

No voice previously sounded so tender to Mulla Fazliddin, as Hanzoda-begin’s did! It was promising happiness, that there was somebody from the master’s family who was familiar with architecture and treated him well and with respect. But was it the only thing that inspirited Mulla Fazliddin and gave rise to such a delightful feeling of attraction to begin?

Hanzoda-begin suddenly began to bustle.

He knew very well that it was easier to climb up a rock mountain than that one. That’s why he decided to escort Hanzoda-begin when going down. When passing “hellish bridge” (people call it a narrow and slippery stone path) the girl’s boots with flat skin soles began to slip. Having lost balance Hanzoda-begin stretched her hand to her confidante who was walking in front of her. But the confidante began to swing and yell with fear. They both were about to fall. Mulla Fazliddin jumped in front of them and encompassed both girls. A young confidante scared grasped him. Hanzoda-begin, fast and adroit as a doe, only leaned for a moment against the hand of a man who had embraced her waist, restored balance and said quietly: “Thank you”. Mulla Fazliddin felt warm breathing of Hanzoda-begin, and the smell of perfume. Or wasn’t it perfume? He breathed that aroma in and forgot what family she was from. She was Hanzoda-begin. He grabbed the cool arm of the girl and kept holding it till they reached the path which was running on a flat place.

It was an unusual magic dream that lasted less than half a path.

The next day two huge men, who had been sent by Hanzoda-begin, began to carry building materials up the mountain to Mulla

Fazliddin. A week later camels loaded with glazed tiles arrived. Mulla Fazliddin saw the reflection of begin in each tile, and in the evenings when he stayed alone, he took the picture out of his iron chest.

And now, seeing Hanzoda-begin approaching him, the architect felt the former feeling and did his best not to give himself away.

## II

Mirza Babur dismounted; he had grown mature, and looked less like a child now. Even his gait gained strong evenness. Well, three years had passed since he came to the throne – years of troubles make one grow mature and reach manhood fast. And the thin figure and angularity of his shoulders only were the evidence of Babur being a teenager.

Climbing a mountain at one's fifteens- it is a great advantage. Having left everyone behind, Babur easily jumped from one stone to another and offered his hand to his mother and sister to help them pass difficult parts in the slope. Most of high officials stayed at the foothills. The path was narrow; the dwelling-place was cramped and together with mirza his closest man was climbing – the vizier Kasymbek, "kavchinets", as he's named by officials in his absence. Kasymbek was stout and he began to gasp when being half way from the top. Babur stopped. Kasymbek turned to Mulla Fazliddin who was at the end of the file:

– "Mister architect, why didn't it come to your mind to make stairs?"

Mulla Fazliddin answered respectfully:

– "If the master will order."

Babur standing on a flat stone smiled and interrupted the architect with his teenage brittle bass voice:

– "It's strange! Should they make stairs to the top of a mountain too, just like in the palace?"

Kasymbek, not following the etiquette, simply complained:

– "Oh, master, even stairs won't save your obedient servant from sweat."

Kutlug Nigor-hanum laughed:

– "Mister Kasymbek, both shah and servant have to walk up such rock mountains!"

– "And even shah-ladies!" – Babur joked looking at his sister.

This way, joking, they reached the platform in front of the dwelling-place. A small construction under a blue dome was shining under spring sun rays so gaily that Babur inwardly turned light and warm. His soul absorbed the beauty of environment, which was clearly seen from there (mountains in the distance, spring wind), and patterns on columns and railings of ayvan, play of light and shadow against colorful glazed tiles on the dome.

Kasymbek escorted Babur, his mother and sister inside the dwelling-place and stayed by the entrance on the marble stairs. He never entered the place where those noble women were, unless Babur let him.

Mulla Fazliddin stayed downstairs by the ayvan too.

Doors of the dwelling-place were finished with carving and colorful painting. Babur examined the wonderful decorations on the walls and cornices, and then opened the doors. Having let his mother and sister come inside first he entered hujra too.

It was not dark inside but as the tradition required there was a candle burning. In the daylight coming from the outside, its light was hardly visible but it gave an additional charm to golden patterns with its vacillating reflection.

Babur was very excited and astonished. On the wall he saw red patterns. He asked his sister:

– “Is it the “islimi gulhan<sup>42</sup>”?

Hanzoda-begim was smiled naughtily:

– “If you have a mercy on me for disagreement, I’ll tell.”

Babur smiled back:

– “I had a mercy, had already. Tell me.”

Hanzoda-begim turned and pointed at the patterns above the entrance doors:

- «Protection fire» is over there. You took a tulip pattern for a fire, my amirzoda<sup>43</sup>«Protection fire». The patterns, which Hanzoda-begim pointed at, were really looking like flame tips. You came to the entrance doors and together with you your troubles came; they hurry to the room but have to stop as they are not allowed by protection fire. Babur for some reason recalled that according to an ancient

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<sup>42</sup> Gulhan - «protection fire», and ornament of fire, picture of fire, saving man from misfortunes which follow him, according to legends

<sup>43</sup> Amirzoda - the heir of the sovereign

tradition both bride and groom are to be lead around a fire. He looked at his sister, admitting her advantage over him in knowledge like that:

– “You are right, I’ve made a mistake.”

– “This mistake is pardonable”, – Kutlug Nigor-hanum interfered the conversation. – “Because in this room the pattern of a painted tulip glares as brightly as the fire!”

The words of mother multiplied the joy of Babur, and when they went from the rooms to ayvan, Mulla Fazliddin standing downstairs, by Babur’s face understood how satisfied and happy mirza was. And he heard his exclamation at once:

– “Hujra built up Barataga very well, didn’t he, mister bek?”

Babur loved Baratag since his childhood. That high mountain in the center of a flat valley had been erected by Allah in order to amaze people. And really, some supernatural powers rose and brought a part of that enormous mountain here, brought and placed on the valley in a very convenient way for surveying from all sides.

Yes, it was the first building connected with the name of Babur after he became the master; though it was small but it was dear for him and full of secret meaning foreboding the future. He wished that dwelling-place to remain on the edge of the mountain for a long time.

Babur looked at the architect questioning:

– “Here, in the mountains, it’s snowing and raining a lot. Will hujra remain here long?”

Kutlut Nigor-hanum and Hanzoda-begim also looked at the architect with interest. Mulla Fazliddin’s knees shivered with excitement foully. When bowing he put his palm to his chest.

– “If Allah wishes, hujra would stand for a long time.”

Kasymbek supported him:

– “Yes, about forty-fifty years.”

And through the look of Mulla Fazliddin he understood that he offended the architect by assuming such a term. Mulla Fazliddin wanted to raise an objection but he felt someone’s look at him as if it was a tender touch. He raised his head and saw Hanzoda-begim looking at him as if telling him to show restraint. The architect felt like he had fallen into a fire, burst (his secret would be uncovered now!) and bowed to begim.

Hanzoda-begim told Babur:

– “My amirzoda! This dwelling-place has been built by a true master, and many generations will be able to see it! Look, those places

which can get under snow or rain, are covered with polished granite, and the base of hujra is placed on the rock so firmly and strongly, that makes one single piece with it. The abilities of Mulla Fazliddin are truly great. Just like the best architects of Heart and Samarqand."

Mirza wasn't to surmise that the architect had fallen in love with the daughter of a noble master! No way! It's dangerous and useless! Thank goodness, bows are compulsory. And Mulla Fazliddin made a low bow in response to Hanzoda's warm words. But it wasn't enough to hide a special shine of his eyes; he should watch what he's saying and remember that he was walking on the edge of a knife.

- "My master, I report to you that for the building of hujra we used the stones and alabaster similar to those used in construction of madrasah Ulugbek in Samarqand. I set hopes to the most high, - the architect went on carefully", - this dwelling-place worth of belonging to the great Mirza Babur, will stand here for ages. (Indeed, that building in Osh stood more than four hundred years. As the years passed the paint on its dome grew dim, the patterns of the wall rubbed away, the colorful marble was used to make knife handles. And the obscurant sheikh declared the dwelling-place as a place where the "prophet Suleyman" was. Having convinced shady characters of the truth of their words they received a lot of presents. Soviet scientists restored justice: memorial plaque wrote that the hujra had been built after the direction of young Babur in 1494. However the stubborn sheikh went on and used the monument in their selfish ends. Moreover they didn't see the value of that ancient landmark, and in 1963 Babur's hujra was demolished wrongly. And now only the base remained. We hope that this idea will be accomplished (note by Author).

These words affected Babur even more:

- "God grant this to be accomplished. Hujra is more beautiful than I expected!"

- "God bless you, Mulla Fazliddin!" – Kasymbek said confusedly.

Babur corrected him:

- "Mavlyana Fazliddin!" – And turning to one of his servants who stood at a distance with oftabachi<sup>44</sup>, said loudly: - "Grant a chapan to mavlyana!"

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<sup>44</sup> A servant in the palace responsible for the guests

The main servant looked at otabachi with panic. What to do. All chapans for reward had been left in tents downstairs. Kasymbek felt the hesitation and began to unbutton his brocade chapan:

– “Will you let me, master!”

Babur, finding such a generosity defensible, smiled and nodded.

Kasymbek slipped his chapan on Fazliddin.

– “Grant a horse with all equipment from us to mavlyana!” –

Babur added.

And a few voices said at once:

– “Congratulations with the reward! Congratulations, mavlyana!”

Struck, he mainly heard Hanzoda-begim’s voice. He didn’t dare to look at her and stood with his head down bowing and felt he was the happiest man in the world.

### III

Mirza Babur stayed alone in his place at Baratag since evening. Kasymbek told high officials that “hujra was seclusion for the master, and he probably would spend his night there”. Bodyguards trying not to be caught by Babur’s sight mounted guard.

Babur enjoyed the environment from ayvan for a long time.

Spring was coming to Osh. The air was so clean that even smoke from fires burned down there in the valley wasn’t dark but ashy-blue. The valley along snowy mountains was an entire ocean of emerald green. Guessing where Uzgen, Margilan, Isfara, Hodjent, Kassan in Akhsy were, Babur imagined these cities having gardens full of blossoming. Nice Ferghana valley, fairy paradise surrounded by high mountain chains, blossom and fragrant. «Peace and calm», - young mirza thought proudly. More than two years passed since the war ended, and he managed to incline the Samarqand owner to make peace.

At such moments Babur was attracted by paper and pen. Servants put a low table with six legs inside the dwelling-place. Babur set down a mattress by it and opened his diary named “Past”. Last notes were about the things he had seen in Kannibadam and Isfara. He wrote the first note with clear handwriting: «At the edge of Osh on the top of Baratag I’ve built a small hujra with ayvan in nine hundred two. Hujra is on a good place, the whole city and suburbs are at its feet»

Babur wrote with enthusiasm. He didn't forget to mention large violets and tulips, and reddish stones of Osh.

Kasymbek came:

- "I apologize, master, for interrupting your noble work. But urgent news from Sultan Ali-han from Bukhara came!"

Babur put pen aside with disappointment, gave Kasymbek a sign to enter. He took a folded letter with a seal made by a seal-ring. Having read it, Babur raised his head:

- "Sultan Ali-han asks for our support in a campaign to Samarqand", - he said neither asking nor affirming.

- "We are in peace with the Samarcandian, but with Sultan-ali we have military alliance, my master. I think we can't avoid the campaign."

- "Don't hurry to fight, mister vizier. First I need to receive mother's blessing."

It wasn't to Kasymbek's liking that each time Babur faced some important decision he asked his mother for advice. What for? It's clear that women don't like wars. Campaigns, raids, battles are for the glory of the brave and it's important to keep willful and militant beks in hand; they like nothing better than to pull away their swords which could become rusty if kept in sheath for too long.

Kasymbek entered the tent of Kutlug Nigor-hanum after Babur; he was displeased but pretended to be in such mood because of Baratag's steep slope.

Hanzoda-begim was with mother too. Servants laid dastarkhan for Babur, and brought shish-kebab on a golden tray. They ate. After shish-kebab they drank koumiss. Kasymbek wiped away with his hand a white drop of koumiss from his long moustaches and finally began the conversation:

- "Our master entered into an alliance with mirza Sultan Ali-khan. We gave a promise to support him with our forces in summer. Summer is close."

- "God gave us happiness to live a peaceful and calm life", - Kutlug Nigor-hanum said. We have to appreciate this present, dear Kasymbek. Sultan Ali-khan contends his brother Mirza Baysunkur for the Samarcand throne. Allah be praised our master owns the Andijan throne.

Kasymbek remained silent. Hanzoda-begim began to speak:

- "My amirzoda, isn't it better to build new palaces and medreses in Andijan instead of a Samarqand campaign which would take much expense? If Andijan will become equal to Samarqand with its beauty and luster, you will glorify your name like Mirza Ulugbek, - that is the cherished wish of your sister, and I wish god let you accomplish it!"

Babur smiled jokingly:

- "To make Andijan equal to Samarqand isn't it a good idea to start accomplishing it with seeing the luster of Samarqand with our own eyes? Meet it, and then we can beautify Andijan."

Babur's words filled Kasymbek with enthusiasm:

- "You've said a wise thing, my master!"

- "Haven't you seen Samarqand when being young?" - Kutlug Nigor-hanum decided to argue with her son.

- "Yes, I have...when being five years old, mother, I don't remember anything."

Hanzoda-begin reminded half in jest:

- "And what about last year? You went to the Samarqand campaign and left us alone for seven months."

Babur frowned:

- "That's right; we went to campaign last year...and lounged about Samarqand outskirts for three months. Sultan Ahmad couldn't enter Andijan in his time. The city gate of my grandfather's capital remained closed for me!"

Babur said these words with offence and a tremble in his voice: everyone noticed at once how young he still was. Campaigns attracted him, and Samarqand, the great city of Timur and Ulugbek, allured him. Rulers of Samarqand replaced each other: Sultan Ahmad was followed by his brother Sultan Makhmud, and now the ruler was Sultan Makhmud's son, Mirza Baysunkur, also one of descendants of Timur, ambitious, militant and young (5 years older than Babur). His father had seized the throne, and he inherited it, and so he owned it legally. But Andijan beks found many shortages in Mirza Baysunkur, spoke only bad about him and endlessly whispered to Babur's ear that he was the only one who deserved Samarqand. Baysunkur knew about Babur's claims, was afraid of him and did his best not to let Babur enter the city. Insidious, he asked him over Samarqand without forces, but Babur didn't fall for it. Rivalry strengthened being increased skillfully by militant beks from both sides.

Kutlug Nigor-hanum wished her son not to be involved into wars and govern his own places calmly.

Mother looked at Babur, who had darkened with offence, and tenderly spoke:

– “Oh, Baburdjan, trust your mother, this perishable world is not worthy of your grief!” – Mother called him this way when he was a child. At that time he thought neither about campaigns, nor thrones. But there was no Baburdjan anymore, and mother went on: – “The time will come when your dream about Samarqand will become true. Now everybody wants to live in peace. You have such a wise vizier as Kasymbek. Such a talented man as the architect, who has built the Osh dwelling-place, serves you. Your mother begs you: put off Samarqand uneasiness for a few years. Hanzoda is right: you should better start working at developing the valley, build wonderful palaces and madrasah in Andijan, Margilan and Osh!”

Kutlug Nigor-hanum hadn't been so firm in her speeches. Kasymbek lowered his head. Babur stared at kumiss in the cup which reflected its golden band. «Everything is right. But what will beks say?» – Kasymbek thought. «What shall we do with Samarqand? And what shall we tell beks?» – Babur thought. The sonorous voice of Hanzoda-begim broke the silence:

– “My amirzoda, you know Navoi poems by heart. Remember what wonderful buildings Farkhad had built. Your sister always wishes to see you a creator equal to Farkhad. There's nothing more saint and higher in the world!”

Babur recalled the delightful hours he spent in the Osh dwelling-place. «Samarqand can wait, but the fame of Farkhad is a great fame. Besides there's truth in mother's words as well. But what should we do with the beks?” – Babur looked at Kasymbek:

– “Can we do that?”

Kasymbek understood he was talking about postponing the Samarqand campaign. As a militant he was indignant; as a state official he knew that Babur wanted to do an impossible thing. The Samarqand campaign was supported by the most noble and powerful beks; preparations for this campaign were started a long time ago. A horse prepared to jump over an obstacle and having strained all its muscles, can't be stopped – even if someone finds power to stop it, it would either break its spine or throw its rider away. Kasymbek didn't dare to say that to his face. He put his palm to his chest, and bowed:

– “Master, your servant can’t find any way out of it.”

– “So, we shall say “no” to lady master’s request?”

“What does he want from me?” – The vizier became angry in his mind. Today he listens to his mother and sister, though yesterday he ardently said that he wanted this campaign so much, battles, and feats of arms. He is changeable – because he’s young. Like a child he listens to women’s advice. But Kasymbek had to settle accounts with Kutlug Nigor-hanum too; he saw what an influence the mother had on her young son.

– “Lady master-hanum’s request is a saint law for me”, – Kasymbek pronounced. – “Your servant only wants to say that in such an important decision we need to obtain all influential beks’ consent.”

To show complete grace to Kasymbek, people added “amir of amirs” to his name. Kutlut Nigor-hanum didn’t forget it.

– “Mister amir of amirs”, - she smiled graciously, – “You will help Mirza Babur to obtain other beks’ consent, won’t you?”

– “With all my heart, hanum! But I...know what beks wish a little...if you don’t consider my words as impoliteness, I’ll tell you what they are right at.”

– “Speak!”

Kasymbek closed his eyes for a moment, strained his neck. Then he stood up straight and raised his head. Looking at Babur he started telling that the great shaker of the universe, Emir Timur, and the famous wise man, Mirza Ulugbek, built wonderful buildings in Samarcand because they owned wealth and power of a enormous state, but now the state was broken, and though nice Ferghana still existed large, still it was a part of once united and strong Maverannahr.

Hanzoda-begim understood what he meant and asked:

– “Amir of Amirs, so you want to say that we don’t have enough strength to build great buildings?”

– “Noble begim, you began to speak about Andijan competing with great Samarcand. Beks will probably say that for such a feat one should reunite the former state. Powers of all its currently independent parts should be united under one man. But how can we do it without campaigns, under whose flag shall we unite? Nowadays disunity doesn’t allow our great creative ideas to be accomplished.”

Babur was persuaded by Kasymbek, and he looked at his mother looking forward to see what she’ll answer the vizier.

– “Mister Kasymbek, amir Timur and Mirza Ulugbek were not the only ones to undertake great constructions. Mir Alisher built the famous trinity in Heart: Ikhlosiya, Khalosiya and Unsiya. And the power of mirza Babur is not lower than the power of Mir Alisher.”

“Yes, mother, go on!”, - Kutlug Nigor-hanum woke Babur’s dreams which were hidden deep in his heart. The fiery dream of the youth – to become famous, to glorify his name – made his wish sometimes about great war victories, sometimes about great poems written by him. But will he obtain recognition of great people like Navoi through victories? Besides the war honor is too changeable! He returned from the outskirts of Samarqand, after suffering seven months there, - but the dream about victories and great battles was still unachievable. Babur felt that he still had too little strength, had to little yet. But mother points at an easier way: if the fame of Ikhlosiya, Khalosiya and Unsiya built by Navoi reached Ferghana valley, then why won’t the fame of buildings built by young Babur here reach Herat? It will. And Navoi would hear about it. He will ask who Babur is, and meet him in advance. And later Babur will probably go to Heart or Navoi will come to their places. Babur heard that Alisher Navoi didn’t like the current Herat ruler Huseyn Baykhara. The great poet might become a teacher of him, Babur!

His eyes blazed up and he said with an imperative voice:

– “Mother is right! We need to persuade beks, mister vizier!”

It was a “firman<sup>45</sup>”. Kutlut Nigor-hanum and Hanzoda-begim lit up: Kasymbek was beaten and he would surrender now.

But Kasymbek held his position – beks were on his side.

– “My master, before going to carry out your firman, let me tell another wish of our beks.”

Babur nodded unwillingly. Kasymbek stroked his fluffy black moustache. He looked at Hanzoda-begim fearlessly (he seldom dared to do that):

– “Begin, you compared our master with Farkhad greatly. Beks are proud to serve Farkhad of our days. And our dream is”, – Vizier smiled, - “to bring Farkhad and Shirin together”. – And he became serious at once: – “As you know, our Shirin is in Samarqand now; she is suffering, poor, like a prisoner.”

Babur’s cheeks turned pink with squirm.

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<sup>45</sup> Firman - an order

Kasymbek touched upon a delicate question.

Mirza Babur when being five years old was contracted with Aysha, daughter of Samarqand ruler Sultan Ahmad, the one whose forces had suffered a loss during crossing the Kuvasay bridge. Now Aysha was fourteen. Babur didn't get a chance to see her, but those who had seen her told that she was more beautiful than a fresh rosebud. It was the beauty who waited for Babur, her rescuer, people told Babur about it. And Babur excited wanted to rescue his Shirin, oppressed by evil Baysunkur, and show his braveness. Of course, he didn't remember Aysha-begim, but since that time he remembered another nice girl, Sultan Ahmad's bride, and he supposed that Aysha was as beautiful as she was.

According to the tradition, a clean young boy should take the veil off of the bride's face. Kutlug Nigor-hanum was on a visit in Samarqand: she was invited to Sultan Ahmad's wedding, and five year old Babur was with his mother. Sultan Ahmad's son had died, and though people envied Kutlug Nigor-hanum, and Babur was looked sideways, still it was Babur who was chosen to take the veil off. He didn't remember many details from that occasion. But he remembered his strange feeling when a tender face of the bride was opening in front of him. He knows that it was a feeling of admiring the beauty. He felt that way many times – when reading nice poems, listening to a wonderful melody, seeing beautiful places. And images of moonfaced beautiful girls worried Babur in increasing frequency – both in reality and in dreams. Of course, the five year old boy didn't understand the special charm of female beauty, though he remembered his uneasiness in front of her; young Babur, who had heard about the beauty of the Samarqand bride, imagined Aysha...He also recalled Sultan Ahmad's bride and wonderful heroines from books. Babur without seeing Aysha already loved her in his imagination, ardent and tender love.

So, if wonderful Aysha languished in captivity of his enemies, how can he, Babur, stay in Andijan knowing it?

– "Mister Kasymbek", – Kutlug Nigor-hanum said. – "The fate of our mirza's bride worries us too. We wrote to her mother, asked to send Aysha-begim to Tashkent to her aunt Roziya. Probably our request has already been fulfilled."

Kasymbek shook his head.

– “Alas, hanum, it hasn’t been fulfilled”, - he said. – “Your servant felt embarrassed to show master the letter, which he had received from Samarqand recently from ... one of my loyal people.”

– “What kind of letter is it? What happened?” – Babur’s mother began to worry.

– “Aysha-begim with her mother and sister were leaving for Tashkent, but Mirza Baysunkur caught them and, moreover, set guards at their house. No one is allowed to leave the house. It’s a real captivity. Now the prisoners only wait for rescue from Andijan!”

Babur got angry. Baysunkur should be punished for treating a poor girl this way! His wish to leave for Samarqand with his forces became stronger than others.

Hanzoda-begim felt her brother’s mood had changed.

– “Oh, amirzoda, I wish god help you rescue prisoners as soon as possible!” – she said. – “But can only war and discord help to rescue them? Won’t the campaign only strengthen enmity? If Mirza Baysunkur finds out about your campaign, he’ll gate Aysha more. Probably her rescue should be looked for among peaceful decisions, my master...”

These words made Babur angry.

– “Peace?! Look for peace with the offender?”

Mother addressed to Babur:

– “Send an ambassador of peace to Mirza Baysunkur, my son... It is possible to settle things between you.”

How could they talk about peace while the war already had begun? Peace is proposed by the side which considers it to be weaker. He is not weaker than Baysunkur.

– “Baysunkur uses violence! How can I put up with it and ask for peace? Kneel in order to marry Aysha? No, eye for eye!”

– “Noble hanum, nowadays it’s impossible to eliminate violence with humility!” – Kasymbek looked at Babur. – “We should be the strongest among strong ones. And we’re talking about Samarqand! Everyone aspires after it, everybody wants it! Sheybani-khan from the north has his eyes on Samarqand. The ruler of Gissar, Hisrov, waits for favorable conditions to attack Samarqand. Mirza Baysunkur is a weak ruler; he won’t keep the capital of Maverannahr. If our master will not conquer it, others will do it – and the pride of ancestors will pass into the hands of other clans. And if Sheybani or Hisrov conquer

Samarqand, they will become so strong, that Andijan and we will face more difficulties. We shouldn't waste time!"

– "Why can't all the descendants of Amir Timur unite and enter into a military alliance?" – Kutlug Nigor-hanum asked grievedly knowing what the answer would be.

– "Under whose hand, under whose flag? What power will unite them? Baysunkur lacks both power and mind. Maveraunnahr can only be saved by our master – Mirza Babur. That's why we'll dedicate our lives to this goal – to our master. We'll take Samarqand, and then, god will help, all the troubles will stay behind, and that's when peace and calm life will come. And it will be time to build any palaces!"

Hanzoda-begim asked the vizier loudly:

– "So – generally speaking: mother's request to persuade beks is rejected?"

Kasymbek respectfully put his palm to his chest:

– "Forgive your worthless servant for openness, begim, but as my master allowed me, I told everything I had in my heart."

This way Babur got between two fires. «Make peace and be a creator! » – Mother told him. And it meant: «Live a careless life». But Kasymbek was telling a true thing too, that there couldn't be peace in the world. A saiga can't live peacefully among predator wolves; one should be a lion among hordes of wolves.

Kasymbek decided to end that long and exhausting talk.

– "Master, you wanted to go and ride a horse outside today. Horses are ready waiting for you already. Can we discuss your mother-hanum's proposal with all beks tonight? We'll convene a meeting of beks."

Hanzoda-begim cast a glance at her mother: if they couldn't convince one vizier, how would they be able to persuade all beks? Kutlug Nigor-hanum began to think about the way to continue the conversation right now, but Babur stood up sharply:

– "We'll convene a meeting tomorrow; we need to think over very thoroughly. And now – let's go..."

## IV

To the south of Osh a hilly valley was stretching, it was covered with surprisingly bright field flowers – blue and yellow dandelions, blue and violet bellflowers, and red poppies.

Babur's horse ran quietly; the horseman kept looking at far snowy mountain peaks and felt how softly horse hooves stepped in high grass. Spring beauty cherished eyes and heart, but the heart kept tearing apart, and went on the dispute between mother and vizier, inside itself. It was impossible for him to find a way out alone. Was there a wise man who could find a way out in such a way as Babur wanted? But what way did he want the problem to be solved? Ask the pir<sup>46</sup> for advice? Hodja Abdulla fell ill and wasn't able to come to Osh, but Babur knew that his teacher was for the campaign to Samarqand. He heard not once teacher saying that a great dream would only remain a dream until Maveraunnahr would reunite. So, again war; and construction was to be postponed until an indefinite time.

The horsemen went up a slope. The surroundings were clearly seen from there. Kasymbek exclaimed amazed, looking to the side where the mountains were:

– "So many flocks!"

Indeed, it was clearly seen that to the west flocks were going down dozens of hills. Lots of flocks. A twenty year old bek with the name Hodja Kalan peered afar.

– "Oh, wow!" – He exclaimed. – "There are even more herds!"

– "There are also herds to the east, look, look!"

The flocks and herds went fast. It meant that they didn't pasture – they were urged. Two flocks appeared on the slope. And two more appeared then again. From faraway hills following each other four herds of horses ran; they went very fast towards the slope where Babur and his retinues were standing.

More herds appeared to the left.

Both herds and flocks were moving towards Osh. Then some horse troops became observable against the mountains.

There it was! Ahmad Tanbal was returning; he left with three hundred warriors to raid. Kasymbek exclaimed gaily:

– "What a loot!"

Hodja Kalan was excited too:

– "Extraordinary! Rich!"

Everybody was happy. Of course! One fifth of those sheep and horses were to be handled to the master, the remaining was to be distributed among beks and officials. Riches came at no expense! Beks could not hide their gladness.

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<sup>46</sup> Pir - Muslim spiritual adviser

Babur turned his horse towards the approaching horsemen. He released the bridles and the horse ran as fast as a bird flying. The beks followed him, from hill to hill. Babur stopped on top of one of the hills.

Ahmad Tanbal went ahead of the troop, he was in armor. His shield was shining under the sun; it hid his chest and left shoulder. Ahmad had been shot to his neck by an arrow; he had tied up the wound with a piece of green cloth. He became drawn in the face; cheek-bones were notably more sharply. Ahmad Tanbal dismounted fifty steps in front of Babur. He came to mirza, kneeled, and kissed the ground in front of him:

– “Master, we punished our enemies – chagraks – for not paying taxes. We took sixteen thousand heads of sheep and two and a half thousand horses!”

– “Was the campaign successful?”

– “These hellish herders didn’t want to follow the order and rose in revolt, master. They killed three of us and wounded ten warriors of ours... But we paid them back a hundredfold!”

Ahmad Tanbal gave a sign to a sturdy warrior in the front row of his troop. He took a sack which was hanging over his saddle, jumped to the ground and came to mirza. Sewn from rough linen, the sack was all in blood. The warrior shook cut off human heads out of it. Ahmad Tanbal began to count: there were fifteen heads. Babur thought somehow: «Chagraks they are our Turks. And we do this with them...» He was scared. He wanted to persuade himself that the punishment was fair, and Ahmad Tanbal followed his order: they were Turks, from the same clan, but even relatives have to pay taxes, and those chagraks didn’t obey him, they met his tax-collectors with a sword, so they were punished with a sword... He wanted to persuade himself but he couldn’t... One of them... one of the killed didn’t even have a beard yet, his face was yellow and smooth, and a moustache had only begun to appear. Young-chagrak was younger than seventeen years old. His head had been cut right at the top of his neck.

Babur turned pale. He turned to Kasymbek and said nothing.

Ahmad Tanbal and his warriors expected praise and reward from Babur. Sixteen thousand heads of sheep and two and a half thousand horses – it is sizable riches! Though three warriors had died, but in turn there were fifteen heads lying on the grass. These were not the only ones whom they killed revealing their bravery. And bravery deserves incentive.

Kasymbek also thought that way; he was worried with Babur being so pale. Cut off heads of those killed were a tradition. The young master had seen many of them near Samarqand last year. When somebody boasted: I have killed a lot of enemies – and does not show evidence, he's hardly believed. There are people who like to boast. And here the military valour was evident: it became a custom for warriors to report with a number of cut off heads.

– “Master”, – Kasymbek whispered, – “Shall I speak?”

Babur nodded. Kasymbek came closer and asked more quietly:

– “What if we present him a sword as a reward... Do you agree?”

There was a sword from Bagdad among those kept at Babur's armor-bearer. It had a golden handle. Babur had hung it on his belt once or twice and laid it off – it was too heavy. This time he had taken the sword with him and entrusted his armor-bearer with it. Babur looked at the sword, and Kasymbek understood.

– “Dear bek”, - vizier spoke loudly addressing Ahmad Tanbal, - “your return from the glorious campaign made our master very glad. You once again proved how loyal you are to Mirza Babur. Master and all his retainers say: «Be praised! ». We'll organize a huge banquet in Osh in honor of our winners; all our warriors will get worthy rewards. And now our master Mirza Babur presents his sword with golden handle o you, Ahmad-bek!”

Kasymbek took the Bagdad sword from the armor-bearer and extended it to Ahmad Tanbal, who, kneeling, accepted the gift, took the sword out of the sheath, uncovering the blade to the length of four fingers, kissed the steel and said with a trembling voice:

– “I'll remember your generosity till my death, master! I swear I'll serve you loyally until my last day!”

## V

In the evening of that day, karnays<sup>47</sup> began to play, drums were heard; torches and fires were lit in front of hundreds of tents and yurts which were at the outskirts of the city – a big feast began. Beks, officials, and Novkers – everyone who got a share of sheep and horses of the chagraks, was having a party. The most noble gathered for the main feast inside Babur's wonderful tent. Musicians delighted their ears with melodies, hafizes<sup>48</sup> sang them their most beautiful songs.

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<sup>47</sup> Karnay - a wind musical instrument in a form of a long copper pipe

<sup>48</sup> Hafizes - singers of traditional music

Babur sat deep in the tent on a high shahsupa<sup>49</sup>, and four golden steps led to him. Below to the right of him, Ahmad Tanbal was sitting next to the most honorary beks. Now, instead of armor, he was dressed in chapan with golden threads, chalma<sup>50</sup> of silvery color, and on his belt he had the sword with the golden handle presented by Babur. He was congratulated with his successful campaign and his reward. The most delightful congratulation for Ahmad Tanbal was the one from Kutlug Nigor-hanum and Hanzoda-begim – it was among the first ones; he received it as soon as he entered the tent. Babur's mother and sister sat on the same side with Ahmad Tanbal half-turned to him, and from time to time Ahmad Tanbal shot glances at them: the thin figure of begim, her many-colored silk dress shining and attracting made the bek dizzy, following his sweetest hopes.

At the feasts of the young master, wine wasn't drunk, and Babur never tasted alcohol. Kasymbek didn't like wine and he forbade drinking alcohol. But other beks, recalling times when drinking together with Mirza Umarshaikh, managed to evade the forbiddance of the vizier.

And here as well, Ali Dustbek raised his head and winked at the servant standing behind him who poured drinks; he pointed at Ahmad Tanbal with his look. The servant smiled knowingly and poured a drink from a detached silver jug into a china piala<sup>51</sup>. When Ahmad Tanbal took the piala, the smell of wine stuck into his nose.

– “Take it, bek, and let your campaigns to Samarqand be even more successful”, – Ali Dustbek said in a low voice.

Ahmad Tanbal bowed gratefully, drained the piala off, and stretched out two pieces of meat on the dastarkhan.

– “Now we have meat purveyance, it will be enough until we take Samarqand and Bukhara”, – drunken Ali Dustbek said loudly so that everyone could hear him. – “We should begin the campaign as soon as possible!”

## VI

Mavlyana Fazliddin temporarily resided at the bank of Bavrasay River. It was a green and nice place to live in. There were a few pear-trees and quince-trees growing in front of the small house with an

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<sup>49</sup> Shahsupa - a throne

<sup>50</sup> Chalma - a Muslim headwear

<sup>51</sup> Piala - an Asian cup

ayvan where the architect usually worked. Two horses were tied to the shed in one of the yard corners. The sorrel with a star on its forehead was presented by Mirza Babur.

Mavlyana Fazliddin was appointed the personal architect of the master, he was in Babur's good graces, and he was very glad. Mirza Babur and the architect designed a plan of building medreses and libraries in Andijan for many years ahead, he accepted mavlyana's offer about this matter, besides he said that at his absence Hanzoda-begim would watch the construction process and all details and plans should be discussed with her. When mavlyana thought of the forthcoming meetings with begim, his heart felt both fear, and happiness.

But yesterday he found out that Babur was going to Samarcand again and that the campaign would take much effort, all the funds from their treasury, and thus construction was to be postponed until indefinite times. But what if Babur doesn't manage to conquer Samarcand, or what will happen if he is defeated? Then all his dreams would be destroyed at once. But even if Babur takes Samarcand, - it means he will become a ruler of Maverauannah. Will he take care of Fergana then? Capitals are the ones to be taken care of, but will Andijan become a capital?

All his affairs and plans in this perishable and unstable world are too unsteady.

Mulla Fazliddin aimlessly turned over pages of a book in geometry, and his mood became worse and worse.

Someone knocked at the gate. An old servant cleaning dung at tether under the shed with a wooden spade came to the gate. Then he returned to the ayvan and reported:

- "Mulla, someone wants to enter."
- "Who is this «somebody»?"
- "He's all in rags, but seems a strong man. He says: "I'm his nephew". I told him to stay at the gates and wait."
- "Nephew? Wait, wait", - Mulla Fazliddin stood up, put on skin shoes and moved to the half-opened gates.

A high man in a tattered dusty chapan and completely worn-out charyks<sup>52</sup>, stood without moving; his eyes shone. His look and smile were so familiar.

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<sup>52</sup> Charyks - shoes with a bad quality made of skin

– “Uncle mulla!” – the newcomer couldn’t hold his emotions and rushed towards Mulla.

– “Takhir! Takhirdjan!” – Mavlyana embraced him, clasped him to his bosom. – “You are alive; my nephew is alive to spite all deaths! Ho, I could hardly recognize you! You have changed so much! And what has happened with your face?”

– “Hm, don’t ask me, uncle.”

– “All right, let’s go! You’ll tell me later.”

After this meeting, Mulla Fazliddin recalled everything.

No, Takhir didn’t die three years ago, god be praised; this dashing boy is alive, he who had disrupted Sultan Ahmad’s invasion. And that devil – novker<sup>53</sup> of that noble shaitan<sup>54</sup>, former ruler of Samarkand, – he thought that he had killed Takhir with a pike and left. «Poor sister, – Fazliddin thought, - she never came to consciousness after having seen her son lying in a blood puddle». And Takhir came to consciousness three days later with the help of doctors whom his uncle had brought. The pike damaged his lungs but didn’t do anything to the heart and liver, Takhir’s young age and his strength helped him to recover gradually. Relatives and neighbors were telling that Takhir’s mother undertook the death which came to take him. Mulla Fazliddin made commemoration for his dead sister on the fortieth day and left Kuva, and lost sight of his nephew.

– “How is your father, is he in good health?” – Mulla Fazliddin asked and invited Takhir upstairs.

Takhir was ashamed of sitting on the kurpacha<sup>55</sup> with his dusty charyks<sup>56</sup>; he sat down aside.

– “Father tells you hello ... I haven’t been to Kuva for a year too, uncle ... Relatives found an old widow who could take care of father and I couldn’t forget mother and so didn’t want to stay at home any more.”

Of course the main reason wasn’t missing mother. Takhir couldn’t forget poor Robiya, her cry asking for help was unforgettable. The year before last he reached Samarcand, having worked as a reaper on the way there, escorted caravans and everywhere asked

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<sup>53</sup> Novker - man-at-arms in the service of the feudal aristocracy or the ruler

<sup>54</sup> Shaitan - a devil

<sup>55</sup> Kurpacha - a narrow quilt

<sup>56</sup> Charyk - shoes made of rude leather

about Robiya - «my little sister, Sultan Ahmad's Novkers took her away». No signs, nothing!

It was interlunation. Sultan Ahmad died in the year he approached Fergana and his forces scattered; his brother Sultan Ahmad took the throne and his son Baysunkur after him. Brother was against brother, son against father. One man told Takhir that in Tashkent concubines were being sold. He rushed there. Last autumn he reached Tashkent, he was half-starving, wore out his clothes. But Robiya wasn't there either. Life was like turbid water. Takhir felt his searches were vain - how to find a pearl in turbid water? But he couldn't stop.

- "My nephew, the fact that you've been looking for this poor girl tirelessly for three years proves kindness of your heart. I admit that faithfulness is a real man's dignity. But walking by guess is only making harm to you. You must understand that the girl has her own destiny. Assigned things fulfill. If she's alive... someone probably married her. She probably has children now. No one will leave her single for three years? Think yourself."

- "I thought of it many times, uncle ... I want to redeem my fault ... That's it..."

- "What fault?"

- "Her parents wanted to send Robiya to Andijan; it was me who persuaded her to stay in Kuva."

- "How could you know what would happen, nephew?"

- "I could not, that's right ... I won't know rest until I find and see her. If, as you say, Robiya got married and has a family...then I'll put up with it. But what if not? If she doesn't live a family life and still waits for her rescuer - me?! I still can't forget her? What if she hasn't forgotten me yet as well?"

Mulla Fazliddin shook his head with grief:

- "Three years have passed, three years ... Each of us changed, and there's no cure against mental illness." - And immediately changed the topic: - "Takhirdjan, your uncle became a rich man." - Mulla Fazliddin put his hand into his bosom and pulled out a black leather purse. First he wanted to give a few golden coins but he stretched the whole purse to his nephew: - "Take it, go to the shoppinig area, today is Friday, it's a bazaar day today; there are a lot of goods, buy anything you need."

- "No, uncle, don't do it this way; better lend me money."

– “All right, let it be! Take as much as you need, you’ll pay back when you have money.”

– “That’s much better.”

Takhir returned in the evening. He bought good military boots, a Mongolian hat and chekmen<sup>57</sup> made of rough wool. Takhir held a sword with a shabby sheath in his hands; the sword seemed to have fought in many battles. Mulla Fazliddin asked surprisingly:

– “What do you need the sword for?”

– “A recruiter registers volunteers for Babur’s forces ...”

Now the architect understood why his nephew had come to Osh; he was terrified:

– “Have you gone mad, Takhir! Everyone runs from wars but you get into it willingly. Wasn’t the pike in Samarcand enough for you?!”

– “Uncle mulla, I could die many times after that. One bek in Tashkent wanted to take one poor man’s daughter by force, well, just like with Robiya, – I couldn’t stand it and interfered, and here – scars on my face; they’re after that bek’s dagger.”

– “Have you still not understood that strength rules the world?”

– “That’s why I want to be in strong forces. Violators are only afraid of strength. I have seen many people suffering, uncle; I shared plain men’s severities. Many people told me that Mirza Babur has pure heart; his plans are noble. Who can help us but an honest shah?”

Mulla Fazliddin sighed:

– “But Mirza Babur is still young. I relied on him too; I wanted to beautify Fergana. But war again, again blood. We all live in darkness, deep in night. Time is guileful and unjust. Beware of becoming a weapon of violent beks.”

– “Trust me, uncle, this won’t happen. I will never serve injustice.”

– “Babur also connives beks, he connives injustice.”

– “Can it be because Mirza Babur lacks his own Novkers like me? It was this way long a time ago... I can’t find another way for myself, uncle. I won’t be able to manage anything when being alone.”

Mulla Fazliddin looked at his nephew narrowly. It was impossible to dissuade him from what he had decided, no.

– “Have you seen the recruiter?”

– “Yes. He says: «You don’t have a horse, so we’ll take you to infantry». I used to walk, you see uncle.”

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<sup>57</sup> Chekmen - overclothes a type of the oriental robe made of the baize of camel’s hair

– “Infantry always loses more warriors than other forces, did you think about it?”

– “Well, what’s the difference whether I’ll fight in one battle or in forty of them? The one who has death in cards will die.”

– “Enough talking about death and war, nephew!”

In the morning after breakfast Mulla Fazliddin ordered his servant to saddle both horses which stood under the tent.

– “Take this one”, – he said to Takhir pointing at a long-haired stallion. – “I consider myself not worthy having you go to campaign in infantry!”

The architect sat on the sorrel with a star on forehead which Babur had presented him.

The uncle with his nephew started towards Babur’s palace.

Mulla Fazliddin addressed to Kasymbek:

– “I would like to ask the master to take my nephew Takhir to his personal guard. He will be a loyal warrior to Mirza Babur until his last day.

Kasymbek saw how strong and firm Takhir was.

– “Have you been to military service?” – He asked pointing at the scar on Takhir’s face.

– “No, I haven’t been there yet”, – Takhir answered chilly and independently.

Mulla Fazliddin interfered.

– Amir of amirs, my nephew is a hereditary farmer, but he has everything which a warrior should have: strength, bravery and intellect. Do you remember Samarcand forces having suffered many losses on the bridge over Kuva? Takhir was among those who brought us victory!”

– “Brought us victory?” – Kasymbek asked with distrust. – “How is that?”

According to a brief story of the architect it came that plain young farmers had done something that beks and Novkers were not able to do. Kasymbek didn’t want to believe in it.

– “The success in Kuva was gifted to us by God, mavlyana!”

– “Of course, it was god who put the idea to destroy the narrow bridge in these young men’s minds. Takhir was wounded hard then, my nephew could barely escape death, mister Kasymbek!”

– “Really?” – The vizier looked at Takhir much more warmly. – “So you have your own accounts to settle with the Samarqandians, right, digit?”

– “Yes.”

Kasymbek turned to the recruiter standing behind him:

– “You will register this digit to the detachment of Novkers who are training at the foot of Chilmahram Mountain!” – Then he explained to Mulla Fazliddin: – “There are the best there. We train them for the personal guard of the master.”

## VII

It was decided on the beks’ council to start the campaign to Samarqand in Ramadan month. All the major preparations were to be done in Osh.

Babur tried not to show his face to Kutlug Nigor-hanum. When not being busy with pre-campaign preparations he stayed alone in his tent. He was reading books.

Today after evening prayer Babur wrote about his father’s death in “Past”. The orderly on guard informed him that Kutlug Nigor-hanum and Ali Dustbek asked to receive them. Babur closed the notebook, went to the doors to greet mother, and accompanied her to the honorary seat.

Kutlug Nigor-hanum was pale. Her grey lock above her forehead right by her hair parting was striking. The forty year old woman wore such clothes as if she were an old woman, and walked bending. Babur was sorry for his mother, and in a low voice he began to speak about what he didn’t wish to speak of a few minutes before:

– “Mother, don’t think that I’ve forgotten your advice. With god’s help after returning from Samarqand I’ll accomplish everything you have told me.”

– “Allah is Almighty and omniscient and we are his slaves and must not murmur. I wish god bless you, my son, mirza, so that you could accomplish your kind ideas!”

Ali Dustbek raised his strong hands in a praying gesture.

– “Ilohi omin!” – He ran his thick fingers along his smooth face which had no beard yet.

That beardless man was a cousin of Esan Davlat-begim, Babur’s grandmother. That’s why he was adding solemnly “tagoyi<sup>58</sup>” as a title

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<sup>58</sup> Tagoyi - mother’s brother

to his name and treated Kutlug Nigor-hanum patronizingly. That is why as soon as they sat down, Ali Dustbek looked at Kutlug Nigor-hanum half-incentively and half-questioning: as if asking whether they'll start. Hanum nodded letting Ali Dustbek start the conversation. He cleared his throat, bent his head and began:

– “Master, your mother and your loyal uncle came to ask for advice on a very delicate matter. Your dear sister Hanzoda-begim turned twenty years old. It's high time to marry her off. Begim is as beautiful as moon, clear as day, intelligent and modest as... don't know as what, but it doesn't matter. The only matter is that there's no worthy fiancé. Both your mother and your uncle are worried: the best time is running out ...

– “If she spends one or two more years single, people might start laughing at her: well, this daughter of Mirza Umarshaikh is an old maid”, – Kutlug Nigor-hanum added.

Babur had heard things like that about her sister before. But today judging from determination of Ali Dustbek, they had found some worthy fiancé. Babur asked with youthful curiosity and frankness:

– “Who wants to marry my sister?”

Ali Dustbek didn't wish to answer so frankly.

– “Who would dare to say: “I'm worthy of being a son-in-law of the ruler of Fergana?” – Old bek questioned rhetorically.

– “But still?” – Babur insisted.

Ali Dustbek had to reveal a “secret”:

– “There is Ahmad Tanbal among your military leaders. He is from a noble clan, a brave warrior, and twenty years old. Do you remember him uncovering Yakub-beks conspiracy last year? And what a campaign against chagraks had he?”

Babur nodded consently. But when he imagined Hanzoda-begim with Ahmad Tanbal, his heart shrank with pain – absolutely no correspondence, no commonness in souls.

– “Do you agree, mother?” – He asked.

Kutlug Nigor-hanum sighed.

– “Is there another way out?” – She asked back. – “Hanzoda is worth a fiancé from king families. But there are no reliable ones at our interlunation. Me and your uncle made enquiries and found out: bek Ahmad Tanbal is from a noble clan, his great grandfather was sultan and relative of Chingiskhan. His elder brother bek Tilba is in Tashkent

now – he is the first vizier of your uncle khan Makhmud. If Ahmad becomes your son-in-law, then with the help of his elder brother he will draw you closer to your uncle khan Makhmud. And besides: such an influential bek with his clan, Novkers under your command – it's a good support."

– "That's true!" – Dustbek exclaimed with deep concern.

Babur shrugged his shoulders; he didn't know what to say: the young boy even became shy; - his sister was five years older than him; why do mother and old bek want to involve him in such a difficult matter?

– "This marriage is good for begin too", – Dustbek went on. – "If she marries some khan – she'll be far from her mother, protection and patronage of her dear brother and our master ..."

– "It'll be better for me too, if she is near me", – Kutlug Nigor-hanum interrupted again. – "Hanzoda is my first daughter, my advisor; she'll be close to me and I won't feel lonely."

Babur realized that mother knew many things that couldn't come to his mind. He told resolutely:

– "If mother agrees, let it be so."

These words gladdened Dustbek:

– "Verily, my master, verily! They don't say without reason: if mother agrees, God agrees too!"

But Kutlug Nigor-hanum wasn't glad. Why? Babur asked her:

– "And what about begin's opinion?"

Having kept silence for a while Kutlug Nigor-hanum explained the reason of her bad mood:

– "Begin does not agree. After she found out she's been crying for a long time."

– "In such cases girls always cry", – Ali Dustbek grinned.

– "Stop it, bek!" – Kutlug Nigor-hanum exclaimed with temper. – "Stop it... I'm worried about Hanzoda-begin's mood", – Mother was speaking depressed and in a low voice, – "I heard her speaking some terrible things by chance. She wants to commit suicide. I don't know what to do."

– "How?" – Babur threw out.

However the old bek didn't intend to stay silent.

– "Your sister loves you more than life, master", – He said. – "She can't say no to you. That's why your dear mother and I came to you to ask for a favor: invite Hanzoda-begin and talk to her. She has to give

her consent for the sake of the state. Bek Ahmad sent matchmakers. He and his family expect your consent. Refusal will make them our enemies. Besides, your mother is right: if begin remains single for four more years, your foes will start telling gossips: old maid can't find a fiancé. Such gossips will harm your reputation! If Hanzoda-begin wishes you good, she must agree with you. She must ..."

Babur held his head in his arms and kept silent. It was the first time in his life he faced such a situation. It'd be quite another matter if it were someone other...but it was his sister, sibling! Babur felt uneasy to start this kind of conversation with her...But from another side, mother expects his help... She asks for help, and sister wants to commit suicide - what a sin is committed.

- "Well", - Babur finally said; he didn't decide anything, - "tell begin to come, I'll talk to her face to face."

Hanum stood up quickly:

- "Right now... I'll send her here immediately."

Dustbek smiled showing his teeth.

- "Master, your decision is the law for all of us!" - And made a serious face, as if calling Babur to be firm.

So they are alone, two of them.

Babur was turning pages of the book lying on a small six-legged table, incrusted with nacre, but didn't see that the light from two lamps didn't reach the book. Hanzoda-begin wearing one-colored yellow dress was sitting on the kurpacha and she looked like an ill person.

- "What is wrong, begin?" - Babur asked.

- "Master, I need help and protection!"

A tear came of sad face of Hanzoda, but her voice was firm. Once again Babur felt his heart shrinking: he couldn't stand women's crying. He had already enough problems that destiny charged him with when fighting for uniting Maverauunnahr? Babur said with sincere grief:

- "I need help myself; I'm looking for a way out of the situation I'm stuck in right now, begin. More and more difficult problems load me. Do you want to drive me to exhaustion with your tears?"

Hanzoda wiped her tears off and tried to pull herself together:

- "My amirzoda, I heard Ahmad Tanbal cut heads of herders killed by him and brought a whole sack of cut heads...."

Babur recalled the bloody head of the young man and shivered.

– “There’s no war without murders”, – He tried to calm himself even more than his sister. – “Our warriors have been killed too.”

– “I dreamed of a modest life with an enlightened man. Ahmad Tanbal’s got dirty in blood, he’s a murderer. My master, do you really think he’s worth of me?”

– “There might be no digit worth of you with his dignities. However...mother must have told you the reasons. I also have to ask you!”

Hanzoda-begim, looking at the dim light of burning candles, imagined Ahmad Tanbal, his clumsy figure, his bare beardless face and thought that she would have to sleep in one bed with him, - her body shivered with disgust:

– “I’m afraid of this bek!”

– “Don’t be afraid of anything, begim. I won’t let anyone hurt you.”

– “But your sister is given away to such a disgusting man forcedly – what evil can be greater and irretrievable?”

Babur was losing his firmness.

– “Evil...Destiny is evil itself! Every day I have to handle with people I don’t like. I’m involved in matters which I do not want. But I think of our state’s interest, of our Maverannahr and – I force myself!”

They both were speaking different things and didn’t hear each other, though Hanzoda-begim understood her brother more than him and was sorry for him more. She suddenly recalled with what love they nursed her brother when he was little.

– “Baburdjan, my only brother, my only protection, I won’t spare my life for you! I would agree to marry Ahmad Tanbal for you. But I know your sensitive heart very well: if I’m unhappy all my life, it will suffer more than mine.”

– “But I pray for god and believe me, you won’t be unhappy!”

– “If I marry this man? I’ll spend my whole life suffering, Baburdjan, believe me! Well, and interests of Maverannahr. A king is a man too, and he has one life only. We must listen to our heart! A pure heart never tells a lie!”

Hanzoda-begim spoke so sincerely, with impulsiveness that the energy in her heart leaped over Babur’s soul. Pitiless beks, duties in front of the state, settling power consolidation – what a cold complicated problem it is! Hanzoda-begim melted the ice, and Babur’s

heart thawed out, warmth returned to it, the youth freedom, and chest was pinching because of easing.

Hanzoda-begim spoke with tears in her eyes:

– “Baburdjan, your heart is pure; you are a talented and self-denying man! These beks learned to make their self-interest interest of the state. They are using your small experience and young age. But when they'll force you to do things which are not pleasing to your heart, please, I beg you, listen to your heart. The best advisor is your pure heart. It'll never tell a lie!”

Hanzoda-begim extended her hands to her brother:

– “I'm looking for justice from your pure heart, my amirzoda. Order me what your heart orders you! I'll do anything!”

Babur stood up, took sister's hand, and helped her to rise.

– “Don't cry, enough!” – He whispered. He could hardly keep his tears. – “My only blood sister for me is closer than all beks. No matter what problem will come after refusal I'll take it upon myself! As far as I'm alive I won't let my sister marry the one whom she doesn't love!”

## SAMARQAND

### I

Babur's forces laid siege to Samarqand the whole summer and autumn. Baysunkur kept city gates for seven months. Finally not bearing terrible starvation and other distresses, which Samarqand's people suffered from, because of him, Baysunkur secretly left the capital one cold winter night and ran to Gissar, to Hisrov with a few retainers.

Samarqand's beks immediately ordered to open gates as soon as they found out about their master's breach.

More than three thousand well equipped warriors of Babur entered the city under sounds of drums and karnais – it was only a part of a large force which came to Samarqand. Babur had seen that miracle on the earth for the first time when he was five years old – and now when being there for the second time he didn't remember Samarqand places well. Majestic domes were floating below the sky like blue ice-houses, and Babur asked Kasymbek which dome belonged to the madrasah of Ulugbek, and which one to the madrasah of Bibi-hanum. Forces stopped in front of aryk<sup>59</sup>: Babur was admiring the improbable beauty of the dome of Gur-emir, the burial-vault of

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<sup>59</sup> A ditch

great ancestors whose accomplishments made him wish fame. He recognized that dome by himself, without any tip. The solemn look of the buildings, their accurate outlines made Babur admire.

From the top of the hill where the city fortress stood, Babur could embrace all the houses with ayvans, streets and alleys with his look – he was looking at that abode of human lives and suddenly felt clearly that his bride Aysha was looking for him, for the winner, from some chink at one of those innumerable houses. Poor, she escaped all misfortunes of her captivity and was waiting for him, but would she recognize him among that many warriors?

Babur pushed his horse, rode to Kasymbek and asked in a low voice:

– “Did you send anyone to find out about the prisoners?”

At first Kasymbek didn't understand the hidden meaning of the question:

– “Master, what prisoners are you talking about?”

Babur felt shy to remind Kasymbek (he was old enough to be his father) about his bride. He felt shy strangely and lowered his gaze. Kasymbek understood.

– “Oh, prisoners! Females!” – he said the word which Babur could not pronounce. – “Your Nuyan Kukaldash has been sent by me to find out about the daughters of Sultan Ahmad. You'll be informed by the evening, master.”

They entered the fortress. The largest and most massive building in the ark was the four-storeyed Blue Palace – Kok-saray. A lot of representatives of kings' families died with violent death in Kok-saray, the palace aroused fear in them and that's why last rulers of Samarqand didn't live there: they went up Koktash (a block of blue stone, the place of coronation. Now it's kept at the yard of Gur-emir mausoleum) and left the building. Babur decided to stay at the right side of the fortress too, at Bustan-saray palace.

In the evening when candles had been lit in Bustan-saray, Nuyan entered Babur's room. Though being all in gold the room was very cold. Many kurpachas were placed here but still they had to talk without taking fur coats and hats off.

Nuyan Kukaldash's voice was growing warmer and warmer, and he felt more natural. Since Babur became a ruler, his coevals, like Nuyan, were put aside to the background: shah is surrounded by beks,

not by friends – it's the law. But today Babur and Nuyan became closer again, and they were both glad.

Nuyan was telling with excitement:

– “On behalf of the master...well, we brought golden bracelets, different expensive fabrics, also dried apricots, sweets with almonds. Your elder aunt Mehr Nigor-hanum met us herself ...”

Mehr Nigor-hanum was elder sister of Kutlug Nigor-hanum and the first wife of the late Sultan Ahmad. The mother of Aysha-begim died being young, and Mehr Nigor-hanum began to upbring her, as she didn't have children, and even now she took care of Aysha as a mother. Babur thought gaily: she'll be both aunt and mother-in-law.

– “She's exha-a-a-usted”, – Nuyan prolonged. – “They starved terribly, haven't eaten bread for a long time. «It was impossible to buy flour even for gold», - hanum told me. And she cried and cried. They ate flat bread made of bran. They don't have firewood, too, shiver with cold.”

– “Was Baysunkur really so cruel to women?”

– “Well, Mirza Baysunkur didn't eat well recently too ...It's very serious to stand siege for seven months! Dead bodies lay on the streets. Starvation, starvation was. The poor ate donkeys and dogs. We didn't know anything about it. When I came back from them, I met Kasymbek and briefly told him everything. A bullock-cart full of flour and rice, a bullock-cart loaded with firewood, ten head of sheep, – I took there all these and gave the hanum myself. And after that I've been allowed here.”

Nuyan Kukaldash kept silent for a few moments, smiled mysteriously, now he'll start telling about Aysha-begim, – Babur impatiently waved his hand:

– “Speak, Nuyan, speak for goodness sake ...”

– “In a room decorated with gold, like this one”, – Nuyan looked at every wall, – “Aysha-begim met me covered with a white open-work veil...” – Nuyan paused again. To tell the truth, he didn't like Aysha-begim: he couldn't see her face closely because of the veil, but her figure was too small, skinny, and feeble. – “She seemed very... thin to me. «Welcome! » – She told. Her voice was so tender, fond, and pure.”

«It's so unfair», – Babur thought. Missing Aysha-begim, he came here from Andijan, but can't see her immediately. They must not meet,

because it's against tradition, they will be blamed, and he could offend the girl's relatives with his impatience.

Nuyan Kukaldash's face read that he had a cure against the unfairness. Nuyan put his hand into his bosom and pulled out a small pouch made of white silk.

– “On behalf of Aysha-begim Mehr Nigor-hanum presented you this pouch!”

Babur squeezed the pouch in his arm. There seemed to be nothing special, but when he untied laces, straightened the top, and emptied it, two small diamonds fell on his palm. Each of them was the size of a dew-drop but heavy. The diamonds shimmered tenderly and warmly.

– “Look at the reverse side”, – Nuyan said.

The pouch was decorated with tender beads, and on the reverse side a word was embroidered with red silk, at first Babur didn't notice it at all. Just one word, but what a word! «Liberator», - this word seemed to be sweeter than a love poem. Aysha-begim must have embroidered it in advance, because how could she do such a long work right in front of Nuyan. It meant that she believed that Babur would come and free her!

– “Mirza, listen to the story of the diamonds which you hold in your palm”, – Nuyan went on at ease. – “Do you know where they are from? From the chalma<sup>60</sup> of Sultan Ahmad he wore when being the ruler of Samarqand! His daughter wishes these diamonds to shine on a Samarqand throne again, - let them shine on your head for a hundred years, my mirza!”

At recalling Sultan Ahmad, Babur grew gloomy: the Samarqandian was alive recently, and conquered lands of his, Babur's, and he had to look for peace with him – peace without victory. But the diamonds were shining so purely that their beams seemed to come from his bride's eyes. She's waiting for him! And besides he won nevertheless!

– “Let it be the way Aysha-begim wishes!” – Babur said. Then he clasped his hands, calling a servant.

The servant sewed the diamonds to the chalma which Babur wore for solemn ceremonies.

That evening Babur burning with the desire to meet his bride began to write a gazelle:

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<sup>60</sup> A turban

*Of heavenly beauty I've been repeated all the times.  
And now I came to see it with my eyes...*

## II

A cold winter wind was penetrating. Shackled prisoners taken to the main Samarqand square Registan muffled into rags vainly. They were here to get to know the verdict of the city judge-kazi.<sup>61</sup>

Reliable officials had proved: they committed a grave crime – deception. During siege they sent a man with a proposal to Babur: they told him to come to gate Feruza at night and they would open it for him. A dozen brave Novkers went to Gori Oshikon, but as they began to climb the wall, those caught them and gave out to commanders of Baysunkur.

– “It was not us, not us. Those who had betrayed and gave out your people, they ran away!” – One of the prisoners cried with overcoming fear.

No one paid attention to his words.

Acting according to the highest firman and to ancestors' traditions about punishments for enemies, the executioner, having tied the arms of the prisoners at their backs, took them to a pit one after another, made them kneel and bend their heads. The sword hit their necks and hot blood of the executed splashed on the stones of the square and emitted warm vapor in the cold. ...

The pit was filled up with soil, and the snow that went the whole night hid the signs of execution under a white cover.

The next afternoon it got warmer, the snow on blue domes began to melt.

After noon namaz<sup>62</sup> Mirza Babur mounted his horse and went to look around the shopping areas of Samarqand. Kasymbek was next to him and a little further Ahmad Tanbal and another bek named Hankuli were there together with a few Novkers. They were accompanied by an old Samarqand poet Djavhari who knew places very well.

They passed hanaka<sup>63</sup> – a dwelling-place for travelers and pilgrims, which was crowned with a large dome at the times of Ulugbek. Djavhari pointed at the street that led to the eastern gates.

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<sup>61</sup> A Muslim judge

<sup>62</sup> Namaz - a prayer

<sup>63</sup> Hanaka - a hospitable to strangers

– “When Mir Alisher was in Samarqand, he walked up this street many times. There is the house at the end of it. His teacher Mir Alisher Abdullays worked there.”

– “Have you been to conversations with Mir Alisher?” – Babur asked.

– “Yes, we are the same age with him, but I still consider him as my teacher. I read him my poems and always got kind advice from him. It turns out that he didn’t forget me: in his famous work “Madolis ul nafois” Mir Alisher mentioned your obedient servant, too.”

White bearded Djavhari (even his eyebrows turned grey) jaundiced Babur’s white envy. He wished to become such a poet whom Navoi would notice too! And he still didn’t go further than exercises in versification; he was shy to show people what he’d written. “Yes, it’s that way right now, but I won’t give up my dream to become a great poet, that’s why today – Babur grinned, - he wanted to be accompanied not by noble Samarqand beks but this white bearded poet, coeval and interlocutor of Alisher Navoi”.

Djavhari took them to the mahallya<sup>64</sup> of bakers. The streets were empty. The snow was still untouched and reached tips of boots of horsemen. In shadows wind burned the face, but under the sun, by massive walls and walls of houses, puddles of thaw appeared.

Babur was examining flat roofs of low houses. They were not cleaned from snow too. Nobody was seen anywhere at all. They came to rows where bread used to be sold once, and there was the same view: all stores were closed. Babur was surprised more and more:

– “Mavlyana, bakers moved to another city, didn’t they?”

Djavhari sighed:

– “Oh, master, it’s been three months that no bread is taken out to the bazaar. There is no flour left for that. During the siege many bakers died of hunger. People grew weak. They are not able to climb roofs and wipe snow away.”

Babur felt as if Djavhari blamed him of those misfortunes. He habitually looked at Kasymbek, looking for support or for answer to the unposed question. Kasymbek told the poet with reproach:

– “Probably some bakers are still alive, right, mavlyana?”

– “Yes ...probably yes. But they need help. It would be good if the master orders to give them flour. The bazaar would probably open

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<sup>64</sup> Mahallya - a district

again and people will have a chance to eat famous Samarcand flat bread again."

Kasymbek noticed that Babur was ready to do that immediately.

– "Master, we have quite little grain left. We need supplies for the forces. We can't even afford giving out flour for trading. Maybe we will do it later ..."

The old poet looked at Babur with hope. Either black broadcloth chekmen<sup>65</sup> on awkward shoulders of the old man, or short beard of Djavhari – something in the poet reminded Babur the picture of Navoi which had been made by Makhmud Muzahhab. If he, Babur, won't justify hopes of mavlyana Djavhari, it would mean that he wouldn't justify hopes of Navoi. Babur half-rose in the stirrups and ordered Kasymbek:

– "Give out grain and flour to bakers, not to traders. Let a reliable person watch them, they must bake bread and on behalf of us distribute among the most starving people! Five or six sacks won't leave forces without supplies. A caravan from Djizak with grain will arrive tomorrow or the day after tomorrow."

– "God bless you, oh, great mirza!" – Djavhari said with joy.

He was the only one who was happy to hear that. Ahmad Tanbal pulling the bridles of his well-fed stallion, murmured clearness:

– "Where shall we take that much bread to feed all the starving whom Baysunkur left here? We didn't come here to feed them."

After matchmakers came with refusal from Babur and Hanzoda-begim didn't become his wife, the bek began to act secretly against Babur, but with so great detestation, hidden by multiple bows to "my incomparable master".

– "Noble bek", – Babur strained in his saddle with even more haughtiness. – "We didn't come here to feed Samarcand, that's right, but we also didn't come here to rob it!"

Tanbal was frightened of such an allusion – the previous day his people had broken open shops of jewelers. Bek's eyes turned round, but he tried to force his face to show his usual coolness.

– "You tell the truth, my great incomparable master", - he said. – "But I would like to ask: do we have a right to get the loot from the city because of which we had lost so many warriors? Loot for winners is legal, it's our ancient tradition!"

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<sup>65</sup> A kind of coat

Hankuli standing among Novkers liked Tanbal's words; - he displayed it by nodding and a smile. Most Novkers also considered that Tanbal was right: if not all beks got such a loot which would satisfy them, then what would ordinary warriors get, who "had conquered" Samarqand, and it wasn't a kishlak (village).

Babur knew that there were people who were dissatisfied among his forces. But if he gave freedom to beks, the Samarqand people would die of hunger, but they were his subjects now, also his subjects. But if he began to save his subjects from hunger, beks and Novkers would let a heart-rending yell: "Why are they given our share??

Babur looked at Kasymbek. The vizier was looking another direction as if by chance.

- "Not only Baysunkur is guilty of the hunger, right?" - Babur said softly. - "If we hadn't lay siege to Samarqand for seven months ..."'

Kasymbek didn't want Babur to make excuses to the hateful Tanbal. The vizier decided to stop the conversation with one possible way:

- "The words of the master are the law for us! Don't dispute! Flour will be given to bakers tomorrow and I'll personally watch distribution of bread to the starving!"

Babur gave the vizier a look of gratitude.

- "Well, this is decided", - he said calmly. Then he turned to the poet: - "Let's go to book stores."

Mavlyana Djavhari led them through curved side streets and suddenly a wide square appeared in front of them; there were closed book stores. All of a sudden some noise came, inarticulate cries, and a plain and barefooted woman with wild-looking eyes ran out of the stores, and a skinny man of middle age ran after her.

- "Oh, I wish Allah vanish for killing my kid! I wish him die of hunger too!"

Having noticed the horsemen both the woman and man stopped and froze. The man couldn't overcome embarrassment, and the woman went on yelling damnations:

- "I wish God die in siege too! I wish him die of hunger as my kid had died! I wish him vanish!"

- "Mulla Kutbuddin, what's happened?" - Djavari loudly asked the man.

He finally came to consciousness, quickly ran to the woman, grabbed her hand and pulled her skinny and exhausted behind the store, to the yard. Only after that, he returned panting and came to the horsemen with his hands on his chest.

– “I’m sorry, I apologize. My brother’s wife has gone mad with grief at her son. We were starving. Nephew ate oilcake, he swelled up and died.”

A severe silence fell.

– “Moreover they want to continue to deprive these unlucky people’s share, they speak about loot!” – Babur didn’t look at anyone, but Ahmad Tanbal and Hankuli exchanged looks and frowned.

Mulla Kutbuddin was a famous book-seller in the city. When Djavhari quietly told him who and what for came here, Mulla Kutbuddin hurriedly opened the store. Babur dismounted and went in together with mavlyana; the seller slowly took rare books from shelves and wiped off dust which had accumulated after such a long time. He gave the books to Babur briefly explaining...There are covered with precious golden binding works by Makhmud Kashgari, Abdurahman Djami...there are works by Abdurazzak Samarqandi with illustrations...Oh, this is “Mezonul avzan” by Navoi, a book about aruz<sup>66</sup>. It was the book Babur had been searching for a long time; he asked where he could buy it. And generally speaking there were a lot of books which would adorn his library and their value could not be counted with any gold. When being inside that dusty store, Babur felt as if he were in a fairy cave with treasures.

– “What else do you have? What else?” – He kept asking with excitement.

And Mulla Kutbuddin kept showing more and more books, one invaluable after another. Kasymbek, who entered the store imperceptibly after mavlyana, knew how expensive those books were; they were written by great copyists, and decorated with delicate patterns. As he foresaw, the Samarqandian treasury was empty, and there was not much gold brought from Andijan; moreover, it wasn’t taken to campaign to buy books. But Babur kept increasing the pile of books that he had chosen – there were more than a dozen of them already. Kasymbek whispered:

– “Master, we don’t have a treasurer with us right now...”

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<sup>66</sup> Aruz - a type of versification

Babur didn't understand the meaning of the words; he had nothing in his mind but books.

- "Treasurer? We'll send the treasurer", - then he pointed at the pile and told the seller. - "Count these, my library keeper and treasurer will come, pay and take these books."

Mulla Kutbuddin bowed showing his pleasure to serve the ruler of Samarqand, whose generosity is known by many people for a long time, and so on, but Babur felt that the seller wanted to say something else but he didn't dare to.

- "What do you wish Mulla? Tell me, don't be afraid ...Your books are invaluable."

- "Great Mirza", - bookseller pulled himself together, - "nowadays it's impossible to buy food, and children cry every day and ask for bread, my heart is tearing apart. If it's possible, just some flour..."

"That woman and this honorable man...They are starving, exhausted by siege. And I'm talking about money and books". Babur reproached himself, but recalling Kasymbek's protests at the bread shops, didn't say anything (just nodded slightly); he decided to act slyly. Later his cook would do this on the sly in the absence of dissatisfied and beetle-browed beks.

- "Good bye! Don't worry about anything!", - Babur said as if indifferent but with respect and went outside to the square, where gloomy Ahmad Tanbal was still sitting on his horse surrounded by Novkers.

No matter how secretly in the evening of the same day the bookseller was delivered a sack of flour, a fat-tail sheep and money in addition, everyone found out about that the next morning. Along with that, Kasymbek's Novkers brought a bullock-cart full of flour to the bread shops. Bakers lit fires in tandyrs<sup>67</sup> which were covered with snow before, and the smell of hot and newly-baked bread spread all over the city and horse warriors on behalf of Babur really distributed food.

And hungry Samarqand people were satisfied with Babur as much as beks and Novkers, who expected loot, were dissatisfied with him. Those beks who were tired to watch starved and miserable Samarqand and its people, decided to return to warm and replete Fergana without asking Babur's permission.

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<sup>67</sup> Tandyrs - a clay stove used to bake bread

### III

There was Takhir among the warriors distributing hot flat bread among the starving Samarqand people. At first he was mad as well: "Why should I help those who have taken away Robiya?" But his heart turned out to be compassionate to people's grief – nothing left of his displeasure as soon as he saw people wearing rags, young men with thin fine-hair like necks, old men and women were exhausted and starving. Moreover – he imagined that there might be Robiya suffering among those unhappy Samarqand people. What if he meets someone who has seen her and knows her?

Takhir had a hat made of fox's fur on his head and a short tanned fur coat on his body. Within the last few months Takhir has been riding a horse, and that's why his step changed beyond recognition. Being used to stirrups he was walking on the ground bear-like. But his hands took flat bread out of the sack quickly and nimbly.

Hungry people with wide open eyes did not see Takhir but only his hands and longed for bread. People were approaching the sack cautiously, making small steps as if they were feeling the path. Takhir had seen a lot of exhausted people not being able to step over a trifling aryk, overcome a small raise; they stopped and waited for help of those stronger people.

Takhir looked narrowly at everybody. Had none of them really seen Robiya or knew anything about her?

There was a woman muffled in chapan<sup>68</sup>, standing and supporting an old lady and being supported by her at the same time.

– "Miss, is there anybody from Andijan or Kuva?"  
– "None of us is from there, my darling!" – The woman answered in the Tajik language.

Takhir kept repeating the same thing a dozen of times:

– "I'm looking for my younger sister. It's been four years since the warriors of Sultan Ahmad took her from Kuva."

– "Oh, poor girl!", – said the woman. The old lady leaned forward to Takhir in order to get the bread from his hands.

A loof there was a man who kept his eyes on the sack and bread impatiently gulping his saliva, moustached, about 35 years old man.

– "Were you a novker before?"

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<sup>68</sup> Chapan – robe

The man with swallowed face was silent for a moment, and then answered worryingly:

- "Yes, I was, why?"
- "When?"
- "Many years have passed already."
- "Were you in the campaign to Andijan?"
- "No... The cart returned not having reached its goal."

The Kipchak accent and face of this man reminded him of the robbers. Takhir sighed. Can he be one of them?

Takhir called his friend, who was standing at the doors of the bakery, gave him the sack with a few breads on the bottom of it, and came up to the moustached man who was swelled up by hunger. He took him aside. The moustached man sure to say was scared.

- "What do you want from me, fellow? I'm a poor fellow! Let me go! I came here for bread... for bread!"

Probably, he recognized Takhir as well? Might he have a clue which will bring Takhir to Robiya? It's better to talk to him more blandly.

- "You will get your bread. I will even give you more. But I need to know the truth. So, you were a novker of Sultan Ahmad?"  
- "Yes, I was, I already told you..."  
- "Did you cross the bridge over Kuvasai?"  
- "Which one? Is it the one that broke and destroyed us?"  
- "Yes, that one, that one!" - Takhir kept back his joy and anger. It is him, the violator! Should plunge a dagger into him, to unburden the heart! But how could he find Robiya then?"

Takhir seized his chapan, shook him hard:

- "Where is Robiya? Tell me, now!"

Exhausted with hunger, the man nearly fell to the ground by Takhir, he seemed to be about to fall apart.

- "Wh-h-hat Rokiya?", - stuttered he.  
- "Not Rokiya, her name was Robiya! Where did you take the girl from Kuva? Where is she now? If you don't tell me the truth, I'll cut off your head! Speak!"

- "Fellow! Fellow! I never saw a girl with the name Robiya. Kill me if you wish, but do not blame me wrongly. I didn't have time for girls at that time ... my brother fell from the bridge, the stream took him away, I've been looking for him in the canes for three days, but didn't find... anything... even a body. The bog sucked it in ..."

Takhir pushed the stranger away, but caught him by his chapan sleeve. As he remembered one of those fellows called another one as Djuman.

– “What is your name?” – Takhir once again stared at the moustached’s face.

– “Name? My name is Mamat.”

– “Or maybe Djuman?”

– “Everyone in this mahallya knows that my name is Mamat. I’m a tanner, working at currying.”

Takhir thought: “If his brother died in Kuvasai, then he has a right to take me by the collar as well!” The anger quietened down as fast as it arose.

– “Do you know Djuman... fellow?”

Suddenly Mamat called to mind:

– “Hey, wait, wait.... There was Djuman Maymak-clumsy among us. I heard he took two girls. So, he took them from your lands.”

– “Did he bring them to Samarqand?”

– “Girls? I don’t know it... I only went as far as the river named Oksuv, d’you know it, not far from Ura-Tyube. Once we reached Oksuv, our mirza<sup>69</sup> died. That is when the turmoil started. I got tired of it.... And quit.”

– “And where is Djuman Maymak now?”

– “I have no idea. I haven’t seen him for 3-4 years. He was a foul-mouthed man, either died too, or went to serve another mirza. There are a lot of them around here: Makhmud-khan is in Tashkent, Sheybani-khan is in Turkestan and some others are in Gissar.”

– “God damn these wars and discords!”, – Angrily said Takhir. – “You are a craftsman. I was a peasant. What a time is it that we have to fight with each other?”

Mamat closely looked at Takhir’s face, noticed the scar, and shook his head:

– “Who was this girl for you, fellow? Was she Sister?”

Takhir heaved a deep sigh, confessed unexpectedly:

– “She was the dearest person for me. She was the apple of my eye.”

Mamat wanted to comfort Takhir:

– “You should hope you’ll find her. I have many friends and acquaintances here, fellow. I will tell my wife. She’ll ask the women.”

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<sup>69</sup> Mirza – a title used after a name or a secretary of minister

Takhir felt that the wish for help was sincere.

– “Let’s go, Mamat”, - when they entered the bakery he took four flat breads out of a new sack.

– “Take this! You came here for bread.”

Mamat chokingly breathed in the hot wheat smell a few times and put the bread to his bosom with hands shaking. No matter how hungry he was, he didn’t pounce on the bread in front of Takhir. As if being tipsy because of its smell, he just told inarticulately:

– “Fellow, there’s nothing more important than bread. Let God never make you have days like we have had. I will eat and, having mustered my strength, I’ll be able to reach my kishlak.

I have brothers on the other side of that mountain. We are from the kuyankulak clan. As I reach the kishlak, I’ll bring two sacks of grain from there.... I had a horse but slaughtered it and ate in autumn. To go on foot – I was afraid to fall and freeze to death in the mountains. And now there’s nothing to be afraid of....”

– “Where shall I find you?” – Takhir interrupted.

– “A-ah! I have.... a house in the tanners’ area. Everybody knows where Mamat lives. Mamat-palvan ... Used to be a strong man, fellow. And now walking hardly ...”

– “Don’t forget! Her name is Robiya... And I’m a novker of Kasymbek. My name is Takhir.”

– “All right, Takhirbek, all right, if I get to know something, I will find you. Our people brought evil to you, you treated me well. I’ll never forget it; I’ll return you the favor... Good bye!”

Takhir followed him with his eyes. “What if he finds out who killed his brother...”

Once being in a distance from the bakery, Mamat quickly put his hand to his bosom, tore a piece of hot bread and thievishly put it into his mouth.

## IV

“Once we conquer Samarcand, all the difficulties will be behind us”, – Andijan beks and Novkers thought. And they were wrong. For three thousand warriors they had about six thousand horses. There was no chance to feed Samarcand’s people, get enough food for troops and to lay in a supply of fodder for horses, especially in cold winter and in the city that had experienced a wasting siege. The gates are open, and troops were sent to Ura- Tyube and Karshi in order to

collect old and new taxes undeviatingly with grains, only grains! Measures were taken to bring the bazaar<sup>70</sup> back to life. And still life in the capital of Maverannahr didn't come to normal. Samarqand kept quiet, Samarqand calmed down, and Samarqand grew poor: for the last few years it had passed through a number of greedy khands, everyone thought of himself, and nobody of the city.

– “We should be patient!”, – Hodja Abdulla, the teacher of Babur, tried to convince the beks<sup>71</sup>. – The spring is close, with the help of the Most High we'll reach the harvest and all the misfortunes will leave us. Poor times will pass and the powerful state will remain a united one – from Karshi and Shahrisyabz to Uzgen. We should praise God; we are getting a large country, what a capital we have in our khands! Our master, Mirza Babur, wishes all the Maverannahr to be united, like during Ulugbek times, past glory to come back, life accomplishment to rise. These wishes of our master are our common holy aim. Lord, give us power to reach this goal!

Khankuli-bek and Ahmad Tanbal were frowning, but concealing irritation, raised their arms to pray, and like other beks, exclaimed:

– “God grant! Ilohi omin!”

And after that, went home, gathered again in companies of two or three, and started gossiping:

– “It turns out that our mirza wishes to become as grand king as Ulugbek, doesn't he, Ahmad-bek?”, – Khankuli ironically smirks.

They sat by warm sandalwood covered with a velvet blanket, and having evening meal. Ahmad Tanbal, hocking a piece of horse sausage with a knife, chuckled with a jeer:

– “For becoming a grand shah our young mirza lacks only one little thing.”

– “Well? What is that?”

– “It has been spoken at the meeting. Samarqand farmers ate all their grain. We must ... lend them ours... well, the one which caravan from Karshi brought....they say they'll gather in the harvest and will return with interest.”

– “No way. We don't want furuncles in addition to fever!”

– “Hey, Khankuli-bek! We'll stand it, because the sucker wants to become a grand shah. He will never leave this place! Besides he is a fiancé of the Samarqand girl, he has a bride here... That's why he

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<sup>70</sup> Bazaar – a market place in an Eastern country

<sup>71</sup> Beks -minister

pretends to be kind and good in front of these “capital” ragamuffins. Gives flour out and gathers poets for mushoira<sup>72</sup>. ”

– “They truly say that he wants to become a poet as well?”

– “Sure! This is the reason why he gathers poets from all sides, but it’s necessary to feed them – that’s where the loot, which belongs to us by right, goes! He is ready to spend all the gold in the treasury for acquiring books. On our account too!”

Khankuli stroked his sparse beard.

– “I want to go to Andijan. But Mirza does not let me, he said. – God only knows how tired I am of our mirza!”

Ahmad Tanbal rising from the kurpacha came to the door, closed it. Then again sat down at his place:

– “Honorable Khankuli-bek! If there are no beks, what can padishah do?.. Most of the Novkers will follow us, I know it, I’m sure of it. We were the ones who won the battle. We were the ones who suffered. And now... why should we ask permission from this youth?”

– “You are right!”, – Khankuli-bek whispered. – “Each of us, beks, is a Padishah to himself.... He doesn’t allow, let it be, I’ll leave any way!”

– “I’m not going to abase myself in front of the boy! I’ll find another master. There’s Mirza Djakhangir in Ahsy and Sultan Ali-mirza is in Bukhara. There’s no lack of kings anywhere. And each of them needs battle-tried beks, like us.... But my advice is – no need to stay too long in Andijan. We can get into hot water there.”

– “Shall we go to Ahsy?”

– “Yes, to Ahsy. And try to meet Uzun Hasan there. He will take you to service to Djakhangir.”

– “Will he take us? And will Djakhangir dare to go against his brother?”

– “He will... if the number of beks like us increases, we’ll urge him... I know, Djakhangir-mirza has his eyes on the Andijan throne .... Trust me!”

...The next evening, when reliable people of Ahmad Tanbal were on guard, Khankuli-bek with his Novkers quietly quit the city through the Feruz gates. A week later Tanbal left as well – he caught at an excuse: to escort a caravan to Zamin. Left and didn’t come back to Samarcand. He went straight to Ahsy. After that the number of beks and Novkers, who were sent outside the city on business disappeared

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<sup>72</sup> Mushoira – competition of poets

somewhere, began to increase. The gates closed tightly – they began to run away at night right over walls. By the end of winter only half of the beks, who had come to Samarkand with Babur, remained. Babur sent one of the trusted men to Andijan in order to bring back the beks runaways: twenty days later news had come: Ahmad Tanbal and his supporters, rebelling openly, caught the messenger somewhere between Andijan and Ahsy and killed him.

Babur, following advice of Kasymbek, sent Hodja Abdulla to Andijan. But Uzun Hasan and other conspirators, who previously obeyed Hodja Abdulla, - some of them even were myurids<sup>73</sup>, ignored his advice and persuasion. Moreover, openly attacked Andijan, and forced Hodja Abdulla and beks still abided by Babur to close gates and stay in siege.

Distemper came down to Fergana valley.

## V

A bad disease of the young mirza involuntarily helped beks' betrayal who started distemper. It was an unexpected disgrace from fate.

Babur lied in the bedchamber at the upper level of the Bustan-saray palace. Extreme fever wore his body out...

A messenger from Andijan showed the commander of the guard a letter, rolled and obsignated by sealing a wax seal, but didn't give it to him.

– “The noble mistress, mother of the master, ordered to hand the letter over to the master only!”

Every day Babur asked whether the messenger from Andijan had come. That's why the commander of the guard led the messenger upstairs immediately. But an old doctor stopped them in front of the doors to the bedchamber:

– “Let the vizier read the message first: if it's good news, we'll give it to the master.”

– “The mother of the master ordered, as well as his teacher Hodja Abdulla bid, that only...”

– “Bad news can harm the master”, - interrupted the doctor with grief but firmly. – “Recently he was about to recover...but troubles, troubles, troubles. Young people exaggerate troubles, and troubles

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<sup>73</sup> Myurids – students, followers

bring illness. Master, not having recovered, got up – and today again in bed is suffering from a harsh fever."

– "Andijan is in danger", – The messenger has resorted to the last reason, - "if we do not give the letter right now, it can be too late. The master will be angry!"

– "No, I cannot. I'm sorry."

– "But, doctor ..."

– "No! No!"

Dispute has reached Babur's ears. Half-raised leaning on an elbow, he shouted as loud as he could:

– "If it is the messenger, let him in! I order!"

The downy bed was placed deep in the facility. The messenger stopped, not having reached it, and then kneeling crept up to Babur, dragged the letter out with two arms.

Ablush with high temperature Babur half-rose in bed, cast away on high pillows, shivering with a fever. Broke the press, unfolded the roll. Inside of the first letter there was a second, smaller one. The first letter had Hodja Abdulla's signature. Another one was written by Kutlug Nigor-khanum<sup>74</sup> The content of the messages was the same. Andijan was in a siege, it was difficult to withstand it. They had no other rescuer, but Babur. And in the end of both letters – there was a request to come to the rescue as soon as possible.

Andijan in a siege! Bek's betrayers wish to enthrone Djakhangir on Andizkhan throne! So: they wish to appoint Ahmad Tanbal as the head of troops, to take away Babur's paternal home! He thought, they abided by him, - though greedy, self-interested but to lead the situation so far?!

Babur could not control himself, he slid down the pillows, and the head infirmly fell back. All of them!

If Tanbal and Djakhangir are victorious with Andizkhan, the majority flop over to them! Who Babur will stay with here? Can his people run there at this moment, while he lays in bed, his people run, and run... there ... to Tanbal? And what about Kasymbek? Fear seized Babur. With all his might, he got up and sat on the bed.

– "Where is Kasymbek?"

– "He'll come now, sir vizier has been sent for", - the doctor said softly. – "My master, lie down, you need a rest!"

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<sup>74</sup> Khanum – way of address to women

In Babur's morbid imagination Tanbal suddenly appeared with a sword in his hand. The same one! Tanbal kissed this sword in Osh, swore that he will abide by him till the end of his life. .... Here Tanbal raised his sword and began to rotate it above Babur's head ... By Tanbal's feet – human heads rolling out of a sack. And one of them ....oh Allah! One of them is mother's head.

Bad imagination threw Babur from the bed. He stood up with one effort, fully felt the soft pile of the carpet with his bare feet. Forced himself to stand, not to fall.

– "Give me the sword!" – Babur yelled. – "Now! My sword!"

The doctor embraced the twitching body of the young man firmly.

– "Master, you are sick, you need to stay in bed...."

Oh, the doctor puts Babur under the thrust of Tanbal's sword, hobbles, like a colt. Babur broke loose and overcoming unsteadiness, rushed to the door:

– "Horse! I'm going to Andijan! Where is my sword?! Inform beks about it! They should get ready for it, now!"

The doctor ran after him. He contrived to throw a coat over Babur's shoulders. A moment of hesitation – he gave kavushi<sup>75</sup> Babur shoed one foot, but another foot – no strength left. His head began to swim, he gasped.

– "Betrayeur!", – he told Tanbal who still appeared in front of him with a bloody sword. – "Bloody killer!"

Babur stumbled, fell and fainted.

He regained consciousness far late at night. Opened his eyes, saw the doctor, who stood at the head of the bed, dripping water on cotton-wool, having passed it the water fell on Babur's face, into his mouth. The tongue seemed to swell up so bad that there was no way to move it. Something lied heavy on his body.

Kasymbek, having noticed that Babur opened his eyes, came to the head of the bed:

– "Thank goodness! Master, you scared us so much!"

Babur wanted to tell something, but could not move his over logged tongue; his eyes became wet.

– "How do you feel now, my master?"

Babur kept silence. Looked clearly, but could not speak. Kasymbek realized that Babur had lost his ability to speak.

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<sup>75</sup> Men's boots

The vizier turned away so that the 16 year old boy could not see tears on the eyes of his supporter, warrior and his vizier.

## **ANDIJAN, KHOJAND UNREALIZED DREAMS**

### I

The night was dark enough; moreover, the sky was covered with black clouds!

The fortress sank in complete darkness. The streets of Andijan became silent in anxiety, silence, and solitude. Gates of the ark were opened with a careful creak. A beam of light from the guardhouse for a moment lit up a group of horsemen warriors.

In front of them in male chapan and male hat, belted up with a wide belt, with dagger, Khanzoda-begim<sup>76</sup> was riding. Mavlyana Fazliddin with a sword hanging on his belt was among her Novkers. As soon as the messenger from Samarcand brought news that Babur was seriously ill, between life and death, part of the fortress guards turned to the conspirators. There was a lack of warriors to stay by each loophole. The possibility that the enemy would place ladders against the walls and get into the fortress, increased. Khanzoda-begim participated in defense managing – she hadn't put on male clothes in order to play chovgan.<sup>77</sup>

In total darkness horseshoes struck sparks on a stone roadway. The air smelled with rain, a warm wind blew. Mulla<sup>78</sup> Fazliddin thought about spring coming, apricots and almonds blossoming in gardens inside the fortress. Spring – sunny time. Now – he looked around – night and darkness, no light. The nature, fortress, city – all covered with a black blanket.

Fazliddin recalled days when he showed Khanzoda-begim the pictures of future medreses<sup>79</sup> and palaces, heard her words of praise. When Babur conquered Samarcand, mavlyana started believing that his dreams in architecture would come true. Khanzoda-begim was glad too – she invited the architect a few times, talked for a long time, questioned on what place it would be better to erect palaces and madrasah, how to start preparations for construction ...

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<sup>76</sup> Begim –ways of address to men

<sup>77</sup> Chovgan – game played by horse-riders, similar to polo

<sup>78</sup> Mulla –a Muslim scholar, teacher or religious leader

<sup>79</sup> Medreses – an educational institution particularly for Islamic religious instruction

Khanzoda-begim received him in the first of six rooms of a secret house where she lived with her servants. Begim usually sat behind a silk curtain screen. But sometimes, the girl opened the curtain with curiosity.

– “So, show me what will be in the space between the dome-shaped building and minarets<sup>80</sup>?” – For example, asked she.

And both of them would lean against paper and their breath united. Khanzoda’s eyes were sparkling, and Mavlyana Fazliddin’s mouth locked and could not say a word – and his heart was beating like a hammer in his chest. He avoided telling something not concerning the affair, he was afraid to give his emotion away both to servants and begim. Most of all he feared the astuteness of Kutlug Nigor-khanum, who was present on their talks not once, endlessly bowed towards her, hiding his look.

During one of the recent talks Khanzoda-begim suddenly asked a question:

– “Mavlyana, why are you still single?”

Though the girl conducted herself independently as in the nature of noble people, Mavlyana Fazliddin noticed the sincere excitement, interest and expectation in her flashing eyes. Should he disclose his secret? No, it would be insanity, and Fazliddin decided to laugh it off:

– “Begim, I want to die single.”

– “Oh, I would like as well.”

– “I cannot imagine how you... such a noble begim would live alone.”

– “Why?”

– “You.... In this world... there are such great, noble kings, who would consider it an honor to...”

– “Probably, there are. However, mavlyana, to which king would you destine me for?”

– “If I am asked, I’ll say that Farhad is the only one who is worthy of you.”

– “Why Farhad?”

Fazliddin was totally taken aback, and Khanzoda begim asked him another tricky question

– “Farhad is an architect, builder. Like you. Maybe, that’s why?”

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<sup>80</sup> Minaret – the tall tower or a masque from Arabic “manora” - lighthouse

- "Oh, begin ... I have no right to speak this way", - mavlyana answered seriously and sadly.

Khanzoda-begin put an end to her half-witty tone too. She became sad and sighed.

- "Why did God make me a daughter of the king?" - said she sincerely.

- "Were I a plain girl, it would be easier for me to find my happiness."

No matter how bitter this admission was, it made Fazliddin happy, shame to say. So, Khanzoda-begin guessed his love? Not only knows about it, but, maybe, has the same feelings to him? What if the difference in statuses torments her? If Khanzoda-begin falls in love with him, Mulla Fazliddin, how will he overcome the obstacles? Mirza Babur gave him the honor of construction of a small building, which he had built in Osh. And what if he, Fazliddin the architect, would build great buildings, which would make him famous all over the world, then what? Would he still lower the nobles? Babur loves his sister. He has a kind heart. Maybe he would do a charity to them?

His dreams brought Fazliddin so far, but what do dreams cost? Begim's favor to the architect who is in love with her, her kind wish to meet him from time to time - it was happiness for him already...

And now Andijan is in siege. Rebellious beks fomented distemper all over Maverannahr. Both dreams and joy of the architect were swallowed up by the darkness like today's dark night. His sketches became useless sheets of paper. Mavlyana completely hated war and mercenaries. But in the ark today when he heard the bad news from Samarqand and saw armed Khanzoda-begin, he couldn't keep out of it. He thought that it would be much better to become her novker, to go fighting with weapons, than to shiver waiting for the stroke of fate. For the first time in his life he was girded with sword.

He, the warrior, was going along the silent city in alarmed and menacing darkness next to warriors and saw Khanzoda-begin close to him; thought that he would be able to defend her and this thought comforted him a little.

By the gates they heard calling sounds of carnais<sup>81</sup>, strokes of drums, and yells of many hundreds of warriors coming from the other side of the walls of the fortress.

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<sup>81</sup> Carnai -musical instrument

– “The enemy is trying to open the gates, rush into the city!” – Khanzoda yelled and released bridles.

Warriors surpassing her, rushed to the gates. But the noise from the gate of Mirza, ladders, the burning arrows flying over the walls here – everything was a demonstrative maneuver: at this time the enemy set the major ladders on the other side of the wall circle. Hodja Abdulla had many warriors there.

Khanzoda-begim together with her Novkers came to the guard-room. A warrior lit the torch and everyone saw a ladder leading upstairs. Mavlyana Fazliddin was afraid that Khanzoda-begim would be the first one to climb up the wall and having taken the lead he put his foot on the step.

Warriors stood behind the barrier wall. Khanzoda with the torch went up here as well. Fazliddin softly took the torch from the girl.

– “Be careful, begim, don’t show yourself to the enemy.”

A row of wide stairs set against the wall showed up to the defenders. A sentry, having come after help arrived, began to push the ladder off, but at this moment the enemy’s arrow pierced his chest. The poor fellow fell down together with the ladder.

There were stones laid together on the flooring by the wall. Khanzoda-begim grabbed one, having hardly raised it, and threw it down. Novkers began to throw stones after her: damnations and groans coming from there made it clear that stones reached the goal.

But from the opposite side from the Hakan gate, the stroke of drums and roar of karnais, victorious shouts were heard. They increased, drew near – they were close to the city already.

– “Begin, listen!” – Fazliddin yelled fearfully. – “The enemy is in the city!”

Nuyan Kukaldash shouted desperately:

– “Begin, betrayers opened Hakan gates. Come back to the ark now.... To the ark, to the ark!”

Khanzoda-begim rushed down the stairs, Mavlyana Fazliddin and a few Novkers, lighting the way with torches, ran after them. Everyone saddled quickly.

– “Throw the torch away!” – Khanzoda shouted.

Really, the torch could make mavlyana a good target for the enemy. They rode to the citadel in darkness. Faster! Faster!

But when the ark was close riders blocked their way, a lot of riders with spears and torches in their hands. Then they saw Ahmad

Tanbal lit by a torch, he had a gold belt and a shining helmet. Fazliddin's heart seemed to be squeezed by a cold iron hoop.

Enemy's horsemen surrounded Khanzoda-begim and her Novkers. Ahmad Tanbal joyfully ordered his warrior:

– “Give me the torch. Oh, Khanzoda-begim? I can't believe my eyes. What does it mean? Why do you wear such clothes, like a brave man?”

– “Real men – loyal and brave – died out!”

– “If Andijan has no more real men left, then here we have come, begin!”

Uzun Hasan laughed behind Tanbal. More horsemen came there. The light of the torch fell on the face of beardless Ali Dustbek, who was narrowing his eyes and smiling miserably. Babur had entrusted the city to this man. Having found out that Babur was on deathbed, Ali Dustbek, having agreed with Tanbal opened the Hakan gates for the precipitants.

Khanzoda-begim yelled with disdain:

– “Are you real men? You don't see a difference between bravery and treason! Just yesterday you made an oath of loyalty to Babur, and today...I know: tomorrow you will betray Djakhangir-mirza too!”

Tanbal put his hand on the handle of his sword.

– “Mind your words, begim!” – he said. – “Mirza Babur made injustice. After conquering Samarcand, Andijan was to be given to Djakhangir-mirza. But Babur did not agree! It was us who fought for justice and we have won today! And you, you ...”, - bek suddenly became furious, - “why do you insult us ignoring shame? Who taught you to act the way the daughter of a king should not do? Wasn't it the architect who stands next to you?”

Eyes full of fury fixed on Mavlyana Fazliddin. He didn't turn his eyes away too.

– “Begim gave a lesson of decency to us, men.... Words of begim can be interpreted another way only by swindlers!”

– “Who is a swindler?!?” – Tanbal pulled his sword out of its sheath and ran to mavlyana. Khanzoda-begim immediately moved her horse blocking Tanbal.

– “It's a shame to raise a sword over the head of an erudite person!”

The horses of Tanbal and Khanzoda bumped into each other, staggered, and rose. Tanbal was playing with his sword over Khanzoda's head:

– “Defend him, this draftsman? This... poor heart libertine from Herat? Aren't you ashamed? Oh, I've heard from acknowledged people that this mulla tempts begin, but I didn't believe. And now I believe it!”

– “You can't discredit me, betrayer!” – the girl exclaimed and grabbed her dagger.

The hit was repelled by Tanbal's chain armor, worn under his chapan; the dagger dropped out of the girl's hand, and fell on the ground with noise. Tanbal swung his hand –begin's hat fell as well, and it was cut into pieces by the sword; long hair of the girl fell on her shoulders.

Mirza Djakhangir came with a group of his bodyguards. Having noticed him, Dustbek warned Tanbal:

– “Ahmad-bek, that is enough, stop!”

Khanzoda-begin was not his own sister, but still she was Mirza Djakhangir's sister, and he would not allow insult and humiliation at his father's daughter in front of everyone. Ahmad Tanbal turned his horse towards Djakhangir. He tried to justify his actions:

– “Did you see, did you see, my master? Your sister with arms goes against you. This poor old fox next to her, he is an architect. He is the one to lead her astray!”

– “Mavlyana Fazliddin is a thousand times purer than you, betrayer-bek!” – Khanzoda-begin shouted. – “His art could become the pride of Andijan. And you, murderers, betrayers. Let God punish you for crushed dreams! For our dreams.”

Khanzoda-begin pronounced the last words sobbing. She stabbed the horse and rushed to the gate of the ark. But she had to stop in front of the Novkers. She turned around and looked in order to see what was going on with Mavlyana Fazliddin.

Mavlyana touched his belt, found the sword, pulled it out of its sheath lubberly and was about to attack the Novkers who were blocking Khanzoda-begin's way. But horsemen surrounded his horse, snatched the bridle out of his left hand, hit his right hand, and the sword fell from mavlyana's hand.

When Khanzoda-begin rode through the fortress's gates in a minute, she saw that Tanbal's people had pulled Fazliddin out of the

saddle, tied his arms behind his back immediately and was being led somewhere with spears on his back.

## II

When Mulla Fazliddin was left alone in prison, in darkness he felt acute pain. He was brought to a stone prison in the outskirts of Andijan, thrown into a condemned cell, locked strongly, and moreover two guards appointed outside. From a short dialogue between Mirza Djakhangir and Ahmad Tanbal by the fortress walls he understood that he would be found guilty of attempt at the honor of royal khanum, - the criminal is supposed to be stoned for this. This was to be accomplished the next day. Mulla Fazliddin realized with what pleasure Ahmad Tanbal slanders upon the name of Khanzoda-begim. The bek took revenge and Djakhangir assented because he and his mother Fatima-sultan-begim wanted to prove how bad all those with Babur were, and how good they were, they who conquered Andijan legally and for the good of sheriat.<sup>82</sup>

In the damp musty cell, from time to time Fazliddin placed his arms tied behind his back in order to relieve the pain in the wrists from the cold. The pain didn't calm on the contrary, it strengthened. It was only one hit. But tomorrow ... what a stone shower would fall on him tomorrow. He imagined how all that would be, - he felt giddy, it seemed to him that he stood not in a prison cell, but between two lurching mountains and stone blocks were falling towards him from their slopes and were about to crush on him. Frightened by his imagination, Fazliddin rushed to the door, hit it with his shoulder desperately, and yelled with all his might:

– “Open! Open!”

The sentry flinched because of the unexpected shout, then pulled himself together, and asked spitefully:

– “Are you crazy? What's the matter?”

– “Untie my arms! You will take my life tomorrow, but my arm is maimed! Untie!”

The guards were exasperated: of course, they stick around here and watch the prisoner, while others rob the Babur supporters' property. Though at night the streets and yards of Andijan are full of noise – clatter of horses' hoofs, dogs barking, cries and yells of women, cows' mooming, sheep baaing. They deprive themselves of a sizable

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<sup>82</sup> Muslim laws

plunder by staying here. Moreover, the prisoner is a good-for-nothing, a roarer. One of the guards, who was older, told with a husky voice:

– “Hand is maimed, huh! Hey you, mongrel, you will go to hell tomorrow, why to worry about your hand today then?”

– “Executioners!”

The guard roared with threat:

– “Shut up you, tomorrow’s dead body! Otherwise I’ll come and add ten more wounds to your one!”

«That’s what I hear in my death hour», – Fazliddin thought. – “How can people become so pitiless? I die badly, badly. Death is inevitable; I should have better fought with Ahmad Tanbal and die with a sword in my hand. And now I have to listen to abuses from these animals, and tomorrow I will die of a stone rain. I had a chance to rush on Tanbal in front of Khanzoda-begim. Oh fortune, why didn’t you force me to do it?

Clatter came from the street. It came from pavement, then the casemate yard, covered with stones.

– “Who is it? Stop!”

Three horsemen entered the yard. One of them addressed the guards:

– “Mavlyana Hodja Abdulla, honorable kazi with farmon of the master!”

They dismounted one after another. They stopped right in front of the points of spears held by the guards.

– “Farmon should be shown to our foreman!” – The older one said with husky voice.

A lamp dimly shone above the door leading to the casemate. Hodja Abdulla in a light-yellow chapan went straight towards the spear speaking calmly and confidently:

– “We could not find the foreman. There is nobody but you around here. Why?”

The younger warrior said without hiding disappointment:

– “Everyone went for plunder!”

Hodja Abdulla showed a folded paper with a message.

– “Then you will have to follow the order”, - he said calmly again.

– “Take and read it!” Two Novkers remaining behind them, having tied horses to the pole by the wall, came closer.

– “You stay there!” – the husky said.

Novkers stopped, and the guard put the spear aside, letting Hodja Abdulla pass. He took the paper, and looked at it. Something was written on an expensive paper, with an imposing stamp under the message. The guard brought the paper closer to the light, examined the stamp (he barely could read).

– “Hey you, read it!”

But another one didn’t even know the letters. But he knew Hodja Abdulla. He turned the paper round and round in his arms and looked at Hodja Abdulla:

– “Pir, what is this farmon about?”

– “It says that this prisoner is a very dangerous betrayer. And we must take him to the fortress prison.”

One of the Novkers standing behind him, added loudly:

– “Honorable kazi needs to question this cur properly in the ark!”

Hodja Abulla, the kazi of Andijan and religious adviser of many respectable people, who does not know him? The older guard recognized Hodja Abdulla at first sight. But he had some doubts, because he knew that kazi recently was a supporter of Babur.

– “Is this the farmon of Mirza Djakhangir?” – the husky grabbed the spear tighter.

– “Read it, if you have doubts!”

– “We were ordered to watch this cur firmly and attentively, pir!”

– “Is that what you call to watch firmly? Where is the centurion? Where is the foreman? Why are there only two of you? What if... what if the supporters of the criminal would attack with a large group? No, we should take him to the ark as soon as possible! Open the door!”

The young guard looked at the older one: «Can’t you see? This kazi took the side of Djakhangir-mirza too». But he was still hesitating:

– “What would we tell the foreman?”

– “You both will go with us!” – Hodja Abdulla said. – “We’ll watch him together, because two are not enough!”

This idea seemed to convince the husky. He leaned the spear against the wall and unlocked the door. But he couldn’t make even a single step in, as one of the companions of Hodja Abdulla hit his helmet with a hammer, pushed him into the cell and dropped on the floor. The second one stuck dumb and was knocked down too and a narrow sack was pulled over his head.

Hodja Abdulla whispered to his companions clearly:

- "Do not kill! Blood would not weigh on us."
- "They would give us away."

The man tried to free his head from the black sack, he begged lamentably:

- "Pir, spare my life! My pir! I will never do evil to you! Do not kill me!"

"Be quiet, or you will have problems", - the warrior shouted, Fazliddin recognized the voice of his nephew.

- "Stop!", - Hodja Abdulla ordered Tokhir. - "Tie his hands and legs, it's enough for him, another one is unconscious."

- "I'll see!"

Mulla Fazliddin rushed to Takhir and Hodja Abdulla:

- "Teacher! Nephew! Takhirjan! My rescuers!"

Having not untied his arms but supporting the architect firmly and fondly, Hodja Abdulla brought the prisoner to the yard. Under the light of the lamp he cut the rope with a dagger.

Takhir and his fellow took the second guard into the cell and locked the door from outside.

- "My nephew, where did God grant you from?"
- "I came from Samarkand as a messenger."
- "Is Mirza Babur OK?"
- "Yes, he recovered. He is on the way here, is coming to help!"
- "Does he know that Andijan has been conquered?"
- "Not yet, that is the problem!"

Hodja Abdulla whispered:

- "Quiet! Quiet, please."

Takhir put his uncle on his horse and they all started through the city slowly and carefully. Fortunately no one saw them. The winners were busy with robbery in the yards.

Four of them rode three horses to the fortress wall. No one was here as well.

- "This is the better place to climb over." - Hodja Abdulla never raised his voice.

Everyone dismounted from the horses. Takhir's fellow took a large circle from the bag - it was a rope. Takhir threw a rope ladder and they all climbed the wall. Hodja Abdulla came close to Mulla Fazliddin ("It's dangerous to go through the gates". - "I understand it,

pir, and thank you, teacher!"), took something out of his bosom and gave it to him. It was a leather purse full of gold.

This is from royal khanum, mother of the master.

– “Oh, does she know what situation I was involved in too?”

– “Khanum crying begged me to rescue you, and Tanbal as you know wants to dishonor Khanzoda-begim. But as far as we are alive, we won’t let anyone dishonor the family of Mirza Babur. Is it right?”

– “Yes, exactly!”, – Mulla Fazliddin putting the wallet into his inner pocket said emphatically: – “I’m going straight to Mirza Babur!”

– “Mavlyana”, - the voice of Hodja Abdulla became even quieter.

– “I and royal begim would like to give you another advice”, - then he started to speak Arabic, which he taught Fazliddin some time ago, and that’s why he called him a teacher. – “Mavlyana! Takhirbek will go to Samarqand. Mirza Babur might have left Samarqand already and is on the way here. The messenger will meet him. And you, mavlyana, have a unique talent, and you should take care of it. Fear and distemper will not be over in Maverannahr very fast. You once told that you wished to go to Herat. It’s time to make this dream come true.”

Fazliddin had been to Herat and lively imagined the very long road there. It ran through uneasy places and it would take months to cover it. The heart of the architect became heavy: to leave everything, what for? The forgotten pain in his wounded arm came back. Fazliddin rubbed his right wrist.

– “How shall I leave my motherland, teacher?”

– “For now, Horasan, where Alisher Navoi lives, is your motherland, mavlyana.”

– “Sure.... But motherland... I probably won’t be able to come back, and I left my books and sketches at home. Takhir!”

– “I’ll come back home and hide everything thoroughly, don’t worry, uncle!”

Anguish oppressed Fazliddin – missing Khanzoda whom he felt he would never see again. He realized that one of the reasons of Hodja Abdulla and Kutlug Nigor-khanum’s decision to send him to Herat was tender and complicated relations between the architect and Khanzoda-begim, relations which brought both joy and suffering.

Fazliddin kept silence for a long time. Finally he addressed Hodja Abdulla:

– “My teacher, in order to help keep honor of the name of Babur-mirza, I’m ready for everything. But I ask only about one thing: tell

royal khanum not to believe false rumors. There is nothing to suspect Khanzoda-begim in, there's no other person as pure as she is!"

- "And you are too, mavlyana, I know it. If we didn't believe in your honesty, would we cheat the guards taking risk of being killed? Never thought I would do such things, but Takhirkbek encouraged me to. As they say, we should use war ruse against the crafty designs of the enemy."

- "You presented a new life to me, teacher! But be careful too, please. And you, nephew!"

The horizon on the eastern part of the sky began to brighten. Mulla Fazliddin started to tie a rope around himself.

- "See you again, uncle!"

- "It's all the will of the Most High/God/ .... Takhir, my sketches... all the papers should not be lost. You are a warrior; it's hard for you to keep them. So, find a chance to give them to Khanzoda-begim. Give everything, not only sketches, ok?"

- "I will do it!"

- "I will inform begim about your request on my own!", - Hodja Abdulla said.

And they hugged each other before Fazliddin climbed down the wall that consisted of eleven layers.

### III

At dawn Mulla Fazliddin reached the road that led to Kuva.

And in the afternoon already the people of Ahmad Tanbal had rushed into the house of one of myurids of Hodja Abdulla where he hid. The guards, locked in the cell, of course told who and how they rescued Mulla Fazliddin.

Excited Ahmad Tanbal rode to the place where Hodja Abdulla was caught. The street by Hakan gates was crowded. Surrounded by an armed convoy, Hodja Abdulla went slowly like a criminal; he was in a long shirt reaching his toes, his arms were tied behind his back, pale face. White turban<sup>83</sup> and shirt stressed the blackness of his face overgrown with a beard.

The crowd stepped aside, letting the way to Tanbal. Novkers dragging Hodja Abdulla stopped. Tanbal tightened the bridles and made the horse stop:

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<sup>83</sup> Turban – a man's headdress, worn especially by Muslim, made by swathing a length of linen, silk, etc. around the head or caplike base

– “Huh, lying pir! Babur’s henchman! You’ve been machinating us enough and now you broke into a lie, helped a cur to escape from deserved punishment!”

– “I only rescued an innocent from unjust death!”

Hundreds of eyes stared at Hodja Abdulla. If he would show his fear, will be taken aback, then people would think that he’s really guilty.

Hodja Abdulla tried to pull himself together and keep his head:

– “I showed the guard the seal of Mirza Babur. I know him, Mirza Babur, as the only ruler of Andijan!”

– “You, reprobate, tell a lie to your murids even now! What seals? Mirza Babur is in Samarcand, he is dead. The throne belongs to Mirza Djakhangir!”

– “Moslems, do not believe in a lie! God be praised, Mirza Babur is alive! And he will come to Andijan!”

– “You are the one who tells a lie! People, he tells a lie to his murids, he tries to hide his guilt! He helped one criminal, his friend, to run away. The impious pir is to be killed! Throw stones into him! If you want to make a godly deed, throw stones into him!”

And Tanbal leaned from the saddle, and adroitly picked up a feast sized stone from the ground. Then he became straight and threw the stone into Hodja Abdulla.

The stone hit the wide chest of Hodja, left a sharp dusty stain and fell on the ground. Tears came of the eyes of Hodja Abdulla because of unexpected pain.

Novkers leaning began to look for stones. Hodja Abdulla shouted with all his might:

– “Moslems! What’s wrong with you! What are you doing, come around!”

He noticed a boy of twenty in the crowd. And suddenly he clearly recalled how Mirab Gov had been executed some day. This boy was his son; he was a chip off the old block. If Hodja Abdulla told Babur then: “Do not execute him! «... If he even says so... But he gave another advice – do not go against such beks as Ahmad Tanbal, he wasn’t able to protect the innocent. And now he was the innocent to be executed. And now the son of dervish<sup>84</sup>, son of Gov, taking revenge for his father, would throw a stone into him. Would throw – but would

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<sup>84</sup> Dervish – a member of Muslim religious group who vowed to live a life of poverty

he be wrong? But yet no one threw stones into him. He had saved a man, so what for is he to be killed?"

– "Moslems!" – Hodja Abdulla exclaimed again. – "I'm not afraid to die for the truth! On whose side the truth is – think about it. Who makes a younger brother an enemy of the elder one? Who envies virtuous people and tries to destroy them with a sword or slander? Who brought us rainy days?!"

– "You did! You...", – Tanbal yelled.

– "I taught Mirza Babur since his youth, called him to be a square shooter, to try to unite Maverannahr, and stop civil wars. Mirza Babur began to accomplish a great deed, to unite Samarqand and Andijan. I was happy sincerely, and you, what did you do, rebellious beks? Broke the state again, people, if your problems would disappear with my death, then kill me, I agree!"

– "Take stones, now!" – Tanbal ordered to the crowd.

Someone's whining voice objected timidly:

– "How can we without fatvo of sheyh-ul-islam<sup>85</sup>?"

One of the old men confessed:

– "We are afraid of damnation of pir!"

Even Novkers could not dare start the execution, with stones in their hands they turned to Tanbal. He became furious and ordered:

– "Hey, centurion! Take your sword and cut his head off!"

The centurion, black as an African, took the sword with silver handle out of the sheath. Hodja Abdulla looked straight into his eyes, lowered his voice and warned:

– "Be aware, Mirbadal-bek, of my innocent blood to drop on seven generation of yours."

Crowd began whispering timidly:

– "The blood of pir would drop on all of us!"

The blade of centurion couldn't rise. His owner begged:

– "Oh, venerable bek, please, dismiss me from this evil action!"

Tanbal hit his back with his lash.

– "I dismiss you from your post, coward! Well, all right! Hey, Novkers! Take this reprobate to the guard room by the gates! And you, - bek looked at the crowd furiously, - stay here! The one who will follow us will be killed with a sword! No mercy! No mercy!"

Approximately in an hour Ahmad Tanbal with his Novkers rode from guard room to the ark. The Andijan people went to the guard

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85 Fatvo of Sheyh-ul-islam – Islam patriarch's permission

room then, came and found Hodja Abdulla hung on the crossbar of the gates. The turban of pir was on the ground under him. The body stretched and had already grown numb. People carefully took the body off the gallows, wrapped it into the material after untwisting the turban and buried him as an innocent hero.

#### IV

Endless spring rains turned the roads into bog. Takhir rode in sprays of water and wet loam, without sparing horse, to Samarqand as quick as possible, to tell about the situation in Andijan. If Mirza Babur recovered and left Samarqand, relying on the loyalty of Andijan people, if he was not alerted, everything would be bad, very bad! So Takhir rode the horse. The horse was strong, but the loam reaching the very belly, takes too much strength. The horse fell and blood foam went from his nostrils. It happened near Kuva. Takhir took the harness, went by foot to Kuva, and found a horse there. Day and night he rode and this one was dead too. He still had Kokand, Hodjent, and Djizak in front of him - a dozen of days. Takhir looked at the birds flying over him with envy.

Meanwhile, even if Takhir turned a bird and flew, he would not find Babur in Samarqand. Babur hurried to help his mother and teacher. He moved slower than he wanted but as he hoped, Andijan could withstand a siege for a long time. Andijan had provisions in reserve for a year, thousands of people under guidance of such a brave man as Hodja Abdulla. Samarqand could withstand a seven month siege without having any of it.

Babur passed Bulungur village and Haliliya fortress, and came close to Sangzor River.

Babur, who recently recovered after a serious illness, had been persuaded to get into a cart, harnessed with three horses, soft pillows inside, and curtains on the sides and in the back of the cart. On pits and bumps the red curtains were fluttering like flame tips. Babur scrambled down the feather bed, threw away the curtain on the back of the cart, and looked at the road left behind.

Five-six versts behind the forces another cart but more beautiful was coming. Escorted by a dozen horsemen there was aunt of Babur Mehr Nigor-khanum and his bride Aysha. The ruler of Buhara Sultan Ali, having found out that Babur was going to leave Samarqand, placed his forces by Shahrisabz, and waited ready to attack the capital. Babur

foresaw this consequence of his leave and that's why he didn't want to leave his bride in Samarqand – he didn't expect anything good from Sultan Ali. Besides, Mehr Nigor-khanum and Aysha-begim wanted to get rid of all types of danger: Baysunkur was enough for them. Now Tashkent was the safest place for them. The ruler there was Makhmud-khan – elder brother of Mehr Nigor-khanum and the uncle of Babur. The sister of Aysha-begim Roziya-begim was in Tashkent too, with Makhmud-khan. And the road to Tashkent concurs with the road to Andijan until Djizak. And so it comes out that Bour escorted and cleared the way for his aunt and bride with all the servants and property. In order not to break traditions, there was distance of five-six versts between groom and bride; they went in two separate groups. And when in the evening, after crossing Sangzor, the forces stopped on the green hills, the distance remained the same and yurts<sup>86</sup> were placed in different places.

Tulips bloomed on the slopes of the hills. The air was clean, the wind was soft. Babur walking on soft grass felt free and easy.

The uneasiness and depression he felt when leaving Samarqand began to disappear little by little.

But there were things to lose heart because of!

With such difficulty to conquer Samarqand and later leave it by his own will! It seemed that all the efforts were for nothing, and Babur was in a bad mood because of it most of the time. And now he with joy breathed in fresh air on these green hills and didn't think about Samarqand, didn't think about his ambitious intentions, no, he, thought that he went to save his mother and teacher, and there is satisfactory kindness and nobility in it, if as Khanzoda-begim had advised, to listen to calls of the heart. His bride is under his protection and this is a good thing too, it is fortitude to act this way!

Babur came to consciousness step by step. When the narrow passageway between the mountains, named "gates of Timur", was behind, Babur opened the door of his cart and called his stableman. He ordered:

– “Br-r-r-ring m-m-y ash-sh-grey-y!”

Babur fully looked recovered, but he was stuttering badly – it was the consequence of severe disease. Kasymbek heard it and came to the cart.

– “Master, what do you need a horse for?”

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<sup>86</sup> Yurts namad's -tent

Babur feeling that he would stutter again, nodded, and looked at the stableman confidently: "Do what I said!"

Kasymbek tried to dissuade him. Doctor, grey pudge, was coming next to him, and asked not to mount the horse for three-four days at least. Babur hardly pronounced:

– "I wa-a-ant to ri-de ho-r-r-se!"

A stableman brought the horse with saddle-cloth and harness sparkling under the sun.

– "Come back!", – Kasymbek yelled, but Babur didn't let to take the horse back. And ordered:

– "No-o, br-r-ring the hor-r-se!", – and added smiling: – "Don-n-t wor-r-r-ry, b-b-be-k!"

The cart stopped. Babur went down the pulled out stairs and came to the horse. He stood for a while, crabbed the pommel of the saddle and with one stroke mounted the horse. The stableman smiled with admiration, giving Babur the bridle's end.

Kasymbek followed Babur and didn't get behind him further than one step: if something would happen he was ready to come to help.

But they reached Djizak without problems.

Babur had ridden a horse since his childhood. He missed it very much. Soft pillows in the cart reminded him of the illness. And the fresh, joyful and strong pace of the ash grey horse arose strength in Babur, strength which had faded out since his illness. The more Babur rode the horse, the better he felt.

They halted for a night's lodging on the green hills behind Djizak. The jurts of bride and groom were again in two different places, far from each other. But the news that Babur rode a horse today and felt good, reached the aunt and the bride.

Mehr Nigor-khanum was aunt for the groom, and for the girl-bride she was mother-in-law, and according to traditions this circumstance was convenient for exchanging gifts. After evening prayer the vizier brought a gift from Mehr Nigor-khanum to Mirza Babur: a golden chapan, belt sewed with gold, expensive kamcha<sup>87</sup> with a silver handle. The chapan was a symbol of happiness regarding Babur's recovering. The belt was a wish to Babur to become stronger and more powerful. And kamcha ... kamcha was sent maybe just because he rode a horse the whole day today? Or there is another

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<sup>87</sup> Kamcha – knout,whip,lash

meaning: like let Mirza Babur ride his horse to Andijan as fast as possible and destroy enemies?

Babur was delighted with the gifts. But the next day they had to go different roads: they were close to the place where Tashkent road turned to the north. He had to give some gifts back to his aunt. But what? How during a campaign to find such things which would be to women's taste? And steppe, deserted steppe was around.... Kasymbek came up with an idea as usual he proposed to send silver dishes full of golden coins. Babur developed this idea: he offered to load these dishes and coins into the cart vacant after his recovering.

– “Do you want to present it as well? But what if you will need a cart tomorrow, my master?”

– “I rely on God and hope we'll not need it. Women should go in carts!”

The next morning two luxurious carts, a row of loaded wagons and camels turned to the north – through Mirzachul to Tashkent. In addition to their guards Babur sent a hundred people from his forces to escort them.

Soon the carts, wagons and warriors passed out of sight. Forces went their way, and Babur stood lonely on one of the hills, not looking at the forces but after, the carts passed out of sight and were somewhere in the endless steppe. He stood there as if telling good bye to his bride, wishing her safe travel and showing her devoted respect.

Babur spent one hundred days in Samarcand, but never met Aysha-begin face to face. Tradition prohibited it, besides the young people were too shy. Standing on the hill he recalled one ghazal<sup>88</sup> which he began to write in Bustan-saray palace:

*Praise to your beauty I heard time and again,  
Moon-faced, and so on.  
Oh, when the joyous time will come,  
When I have chance to see that on my own.*

Then while riding the horse he tried to continue this ghazal:

*Of heavenly beauty I've been repeated all the times.  
And now I came to see it with my eyes...  
Do not I put my head on knees of yours,*

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<sup>88</sup> Ghazal – sonnet, poem

*I'll go headlong to where the god knows.*

In Kushtegirmon, where they set up the camp for night, Babur put these lines which tormented him on the paper. He decided to place them in the end of the ghazal, and the middle of it – three-four beks – he decided to make later, at serener times.

Terrible news about Andijan was approaching Babur – Takhir brought it to him.

When Babur's forces crossed Nov, Takhir passed Kokand and entered Hodarvish desert. Babur spent six nights and on the seventh day, not far from Hodjent, Takhir appeared. He rode a black horse, and was all dirty and tired, looks like a shadow of himself.

– “Why did you leave Samarqand, my master?” – the messenger yelled and cried.

Babur was severely stricken by the news that Andijan fell, that those who were responsible for the defense of the city betrayed him. The whole world seemed to shudder, the earth and the sky shook like after an earthquake, and Syrdarya to the left seemed to overflow the banks and rushed with flood on the neighbourhood.

Hodjent Mountains could be seen behind the river. Andijan was far away, very far. Samarqand was far too! Destiny brought Babur here, lured and deprived him of both Andijan and Samarqand with one stroke! He, hanging between the sky and the earth was seen and laughed at by the betrayer Tanbal in Samarqand, lucky Sultan Ali in Samarqand, Sheybani-khan gaining forces in Turkestan, everybody was laughing at him – oh, credulous kid! It was their laugh that reflected a loud echo in the mountains around!

Takhir told about the treason of Ali Dustbek and that Hodja Abdulla had been hung on the cross-beam of the Hakan gates because he kept loyalty to Babur. Babur couldn't stand it, he hit the horse with lash and ran. He didn't know where he was riding. A thirsty horse brought him to a steep bank of the river. Babur recalled that his father died in mudslide. The bank where he stood seemed to slide and fall into the stream. Babur in horror turned away from the running water, but the hill started shaking in front of him, they trembled and began to fall into some gap too.

Babur embraced his horse and started weeping, stronger and stronger; - his shoulder began trembling because of the sobs.

For some time he stayed alone. Then Kasymbek came to him with the old doctor. Kasymbek told in a voice full with grief and unshed tears:

– “My master, we all got into trouble .... All my property has been robbed. My son has been wounded badly.”

Babur raised his head. His face was still wet. The doctor caressed the boy's back.

– “My mirza, you shouldn't grieve so much: thank god – your mother and sister are in good health, as the messenger has told us... if you are alive, everything will return to you. Take care. You shouldn't fall ill again!”

Babur didn't seem to hear him – he saw only his dear teacher hung and couldn't suppress his tears:

– “Oh, my pir, why did you leave me in this world alone? They hung such a good man! I've got to take revenge on them! Revenge!”

And the doctor noticed only now how clearly Babur was speaking – without any stuttering.

– “I will fight until by last breath, I swear!”

Babur now turned pale, now turned red, but he pronounced his words clearly and accurately.

– “Requital will come! We'll fight! Prepare your troops, notify everybody! We are going... straight to Andjan.”

Then Babur turned his horse and rode to the forces.

## V

Babur conquered Margilan and Osh; the forces of Ahmad Tanbal were defeated close to Andijan, the remaining ones escaped to the city fortress.

But Babur's beks, thrilled by these victories, fell into carelessness. Once, part of Babur's forces set up the camp at Hakan aryk without guards. At dawn enemies attacked the camp. Half asleep people scattered with panic, and there was the bek responsible for patrol among them. Babur was left without guards. A dozen of Novkers have left with them. He climbed on his horse when enemy archers from the advance-guard of Tanbals forces began to shoot the running people. It seemed to Babur that there were few enemies. Spurring his horse he led his dozen archers. Those turned back and began to run away. Babur was carried away with pursuit and noticed a large group of enemy horsemen too late; they rushed from the grove

to intercept. In front of them – he could distinctly see Ahmad Tanbal in armors and shield in his hand – against beams of the morning sun. Babur pulled the bridle and forced the horse to stop. Who was there with him? There were three people including Takhir. All the others ran back, longing to escape from the trap which would close very soon. If Babur had hurried up, he would have escaped it as well.

But he couldn't run, he wanted to face Ahmad Tanbal, insidious betrayer who brought him so many troubles! Babur left the bridles, quickly and adroitly prepared his bow for fight and placed an arrow on the bowstring. Ahmad Tanbal pulled his sword from the sheath; Babur sent the arrow right to Tanbal's face which became red with exertion, sent it right to his bridge of his nose, between his squinting eyes. The arrow scratched the peak of the helmet: the shot was accurate but the metal was stronger than the spike of the arrow. Babur aimed the second arrow to Tanbal's neck – a warrior wearing a helmet and armor has only face and neck slightly open, - but Tanbal closed himself with the shield: the arrow hit the shield and bounced off.

Tanbal's horsemen started to shoot arrows at Babur. One of them reached his calf a little bit lower than his knee and broke through his boot. Tanbal was already close, the sword in his right arm was shining – the same sword, Babur thought, at the same time feeling pain starting to tear his leg, the same sword, which he presented Tanbal in Osh, a sword from Baghdad with golden handle. So, Tanbal will kill him with the sword which he once kissed as a sign of loyalty to Babur? Babur still hold the bow that was useless now: in a weird apathy Babur didn't think of taking his sword, didn't think because he felt pain, or didn't have enough time, - the Baghdad sword hit his helmet. Babur's eyes scintillated from the hit, he had buzzing in his head, and though his helmet had sustained the hit, began bleeding. «And the boot must be full with blood», – Babur thought aloof, and leaning, prepared to fall. Tanbal let out a triumphant cry and raised his sword once again. But Takhir rushed to them and immediately pulled the bridle on the ash grey and pushed Babur's back. Babur's horse shook and the sword hit the quiver, breaking arrows, and cut all the straps.

– "Mirza! Take the bridle! Hold on!" – Takhir yelled, lashing Babur's horse.

It'd been treated like that not often; it was a noble ash grey, a handsome horse: the horse just flew forward, saving his master from trouble with a furious and impetuous run.

Babur returned to Osh, limping slightly, and the buzzing in his head stayed for a long time.

But more than wounds, he was tormented by the injustice of destiny. The sword presented to Ahmad Tanbal had hit him, the one who presented it, - what an evil mockery! They say that everything is predetermined in this world, and pure ones are rewarded by justice, and not pure ones are punished. Then why does destiny not punish Ahmad Tanbal, who is guilty in so many distresses experienced not by Babur only? Why when such a rascal faced Babur on the field of battle and his hand turned out to be stronger and luckier?

Kutlug Nigor-khanum comforted her son:

– “Thank God that my son is alive! You, my mirza, are only sixteen years old. By the time you reach Tanbal’s age, you will have a lot of victories. Today the country ruined because of all these wars. Your uncle Makhmud-khan is doing the right thing, he wants to be a mediator and reconcile you and Mirza Djakhangir. Let Djakhangir own Ahsy and you will have Andijan.”

– “Shall small Fergana state also divide into two parts? Instead of uniting all Maverannahr, mother...”

– “There is no way out now, Baburdjan! Besides, you shouldn’t think only about the state. Your bride is missing you in Tashkent. I’ve received a letter from my sister, she wrote: come as fast as possible and take your bride.”

Babur wanted to raise and objection against it: they had nowhere to hurry, the “moonfaced” only had the fifteenth spring, and he was young too. But he didn’t dare to say that. He also wished to meet his bride, whom he had dreamed of for so long...

## VI

In one of the warm evenings of djauza month<sup>89</sup>, slaves laid a rich table in the harem at Andijan ark. Of course – the master finally decided to visit Aysha-begim, his wife, his young wife, who had been waiting for this evening for a whole week. In one of Aysha-begim’s rooms, full of golden and silver utensils, they laid a colorful carpet

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<sup>89</sup> Djaura month - May

runner. The usma<sup>90</sup> which was on the eyebrows of Aysha-begim hadn't dried up, when someone worryingly whispered:

– "Arrived! Arrived! Master..."

Babur, dressed in clothes sewed with gold, appeared in the ayvan<sup>91</sup>. Long challenges for the last two years had changed him; his shoulders grew back, like a strong eighteen year old man should have.

Aysha-begim who met him with a kowtow looked small and fragile against him. A high hat and pearl ear-rings looked too large when looking at her thin neck.

Slaves, bending and bowing, started to the doors. Babur noticed how naughtily the eyes of some of them flushed, and he felt awkwardness: it's accustomed that when husband was to spend night in harem, slaves and servants were notified in advance in order to prepare everything to meet him, - but it seemed to him that at this time there was no need for so many people to be here.

Moreover, Aysha-begim was shyer.

– "Oh, please, my master!" – said she with a trembling voice, offering Babur an honorable place.

In the second room behind a thin curtain – there was a double bed. Babur couldn't help himself not to look there and felt shy because of his wish. Coming to the dastarkhan<sup>92</sup>, he sat on the kurpacha<sup>93</sup> so that he couldn't see the bed. But it was still in his field of vision. He stared at dastarkhan, and asked in a low voice:

– "Are you in good health, begim?"

– "Yes, thank godness.... Thank you."

Aysha-begim shyly sat far from Babur, by the edge of the dastarkhan.

Inconvenient silence fell.

The young woman had everything that a young woman should have, but only her mind remained girlish. And her appearance... the girl was ill very often, and had experienced many miseries – that's why she grew thin, and was weak. The fairy moonfaced peri, who Babur dreamed of, remained only in his imagination now. And the reality had deceived him with this too.

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<sup>90</sup> Usma – plant, the sap of which is put on eyebrows for their growth

<sup>91</sup> Ayvan - hall

<sup>92</sup> Dastarkhan - table

<sup>93</sup> Kurpacha - mattress

In essence, he didn't know his young wife – he knew her no more than after their wedding, when they saw each other for the first time (that's the tradition!). Physical intimacy is burdensome without mental intimacy, and it even seemed to Babur blasphemous. Aysha-begim didn't light a fire in his heart, and didn't light male passion. That's why he "being busy with state affairs" spent nights in his bedroom very often. And by tradition, the master got the chance to spend the night with his wife only on special days, - this was the way Babur's father, Mirza Umarsheyh, had lived. To the honor of Aysha we should say that she felt awkwardness and drag of their relations, she suffered from confession that she was not the wife Babur needed and whom he would love dearly.

Aysha-begim poured tea into a golden piala<sup>94</sup> from a crimson teapot and gave it to Babur. «Quite children arms and shaking with fear – is it because of me? » – Babur thought.

– "Thank you", – said he guiltily. He really felt guilty: the girl whom he cherished in his dreams, on the knees of whom he wished to bow his head, now was sitting in front of him shyly and oppressed, as if he was stranger. Well, she wasn't that girl, but still...

A woman brought kebab<sup>95</sup> on a golden dish, it smelled with caraway. It seemed that she was about fifty years old, but she had a kerchief archly put on - cocked. Having noticed the faces of the shy young people, she joked:

– "Oh, my master, isn't a young husband supposed to entertain a young wife? Oh, how many interesting things you know.... They say that messengers from Samarqand have arrived. What good news have they brought with them?"

The smell of shish kebab, perfectly cooked from meat of gazelle, mixed with the smell of caraway, when the woman took the cover away.

– "Hey, begin, you should be more cheerful too. Such a happy youth is only once in a life. You should use it, begimdjan, when you will reach my years, you will remember these days with pleasure!"

And laughing she left the room; Aysha lost her presence of mind completely.

– "Try it, begin, come on!" – Babur reached the dish, but didn't take meat; he waited for his wife to take it first.

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<sup>94</sup> Piala - cup

<sup>95</sup> Kebab – roast meat

- "No, no, you begin", - she whispered.
  - "Ok, I'm taking it. Now it's your turn." – Kebab didn't cheer them up too. They again returned to tea.
  - "Begin, do you miss your home city?"
- Aysha-begim looked at Babur's face with a little more courage:
- "You mean Samarqand, right? I miss it."
  - "If God would wish, we'll go to Samarqand in summer."
  - "That would be good.... But how.... Shall I go there alone?"
  - "No, with the help of Allah we'll conquer Samarqand and move there, all of us."
  - "Move? And who will Andijan be left for?"
  - "Mirza Djakhangir for a while", – Babur answered. And grew gloomy at once.

Aysha-begim didn't understand anything, she raised her eyebrows surprised. Didn't Babur have enough problems, while fighting for Andijan? And there you are: now he wants to leave Andijan voluntarily.

- "Though I miss Samarqand", – Aysha-begim said, - "but I would prefer peaceful life here, in your paternal home!"

When she began to speak so openly with him, her face seemed attractive to Babur.

- "Yes, yes, I beg you, my master", – Aysha-begim continued, starting to flush up little by little, - "you've suffered enough, and Samarqand won't open its gates without battle. Spare yourself. Don't go to campaign, I beg you!"

- "Is our current position worth of you and me?"
- "Why do you say so? You are in your country, and here you are a ruler."

Babur smiled ironically.

- "I'm a ruler only orally", - he said and took a folded paper out of his bosom, and gave it to Aysha-begim.

For the last months Babur had felt strong need to write all his mental diseases on the paper and he wrote verses almost every evening. On this sheet of paper he wrote one quatrain.

Aysha-begim unfolded the paper, and read the lines:

*There's no rely on those cling up to the throne!*

*The laws of loyalty are off. Oh, poor world!*

*Babur, you'd better be a shabby bek.*

*There's no worse than two kings with one crown!*

– “Oh, master, congratulations with a good verse!”

– “Thank you.... But did you understand me?”

– “I understood. You are oppressed by Mirza Djakhangir creating a second state in Ahsy, aren't you? Used to be united and now divided into two.”

– “Begin, it's not Djakhangir's fault. Djakhangir is still a kid. Ahmad Tanbal, Ali Dustbek, rebellious and strong beks are against me.”

Babur began to tell about his complicated relations with Ali Dustbek. Last year Babur lost everything and she knew that. He lived in the south, in Ura- Tyube, at the foot of Turkestan ridge. One day a messenger from Ali Dustbek arrived (at that time Ali Dustbek was a ruler of Margilan and he had quarreled with Tanbal). «If Mirza Babur would forgive me my fault, forgive my opening the Andijan gates to this dog Ahmad Tanbal, then he should come to Margilan and I will open the gates to him», - the messenger delivered the words of Dustbek. Two days later Babur arrived in Margilan at night. Ali Dustbek kept his promise. Babur cheered up. And soon with the help of Dustbek he conquered Andijan.

Generosity for generosity! But, Babur decided to display even more generosity: he appointed Ali Dustbek to Kasymbek's position! Raised one man and undeservedly lowered another one.

And what? Ali Dustbek enticed most beks on his side and soon left to Babur only an outward appearance of power. Kasymbek in his turn inseparably stayed with Babur. Once Kasymbek brought evidence of new collusion between Ali Dustbek and Ahmad Tanbal and the followers of Dustbek accused Kasymbek of slander, and warned that Babur would come into a bad end too if Dustbek would come. And somewhere close Ahmad Tanbal had a grudge against him looking for a cause, and all the enemies, from outside and inside, will unite, what will happen then? Babur, having gritted his teeth, had to stand intrigues of Ali Dustbek. He didn't have enough forces, too few forces, in order to defeat enemies.

– “Ali Dustbek and Ahmad Tanbal around me like spiders tie”, – Babur told Aysha-begim. – “I want to break the web, to get out of here; otherwise... all of us will become meal for spiders.”

– “My master, you have a number of enemies in Samarqand as well. If another war breaks...”

– “But we have quite a few friends in Samarqand too.”

– “Did the messenger from there invite you to the capital?”

This conversation with the messenger from Samarqand had to be a secret.

Samarqand beks and Sultan Ali had more and more disagreements. Beks with Mazid Tarkhan at the head with their Novkers had left the city. Thousands of warriors and beks were ready for everything – it's a serious power! Sheybani-khan who recently conquered Bukhara now was aiming at Samarqand. If Babur did arrive there soon, Sultan Ali could surrender the capital to Sheybani-khan. Familiar with blood-thirstiness of Sheybani, people were ready to open city gates for Babur.

Should he use such a favorable turning point in this game, arranged by destiny?

– “The messenger really invited us to Samarqand”, – Babur answered Aysha-begim. – “But Sultan Ali won't leave the throne so easy.”

– “So, war again! Danger again!”

– “Begin, Alps can't be without snow, and the life of a real djigit<sup>96</sup> can't be without dangers.”

– “Master was talking about a web....He would leave for Samarqand, and what about us? Shall we stay in the web?”

– “If you want, I'll take you with me!”

– “To the battlefield?”

Babur turned red in his face: the arrow of a slight irony reached the aim.

– “Until the war ends, you and mother with Khanzoda-begim would live in Ura-Tyube. It's a good place. The wife of the ruler of this city is a sister of my mother. It's easy to get to Samarqand from there.”

– “Ura-Tyube? In these highlands the roads must be very bad. I can't ride a horse.”

– “You can go in cart.”

Aysha-begim liked peaceful and settled life in one place, trips were torments for her.

– “Oh, I'm afraid... both of carts, and roads.”

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<sup>96</sup> Djigit – young man

«The destiny treated me with this as well, – Babur thought. – It gave such a fidgety man such a weak wife who likes to stay in one place!» But after all, why hold these conversations now? A weak woman needs protection. He will protect her!

Babur started speaking and feigned gaily:

– “If you are afraid of carts and can’t ride a horse, then I’ll carry you in my hands, begin!”

– “Don’t make laugh of me! I’m not worth that ...”

The words of Aysha-begin seemed to Babur to have some other, nice and calling meaning. Young blood rushed to his head. He stood up from the dastarkhan.

– “No, you are!”

– “Don’t laugh, please ...”

– “Want me to prove, prove it?”, – Babur scared her childly.

Aysha-begin leaped to her feet like a gazelle and was ready to run away. Babur caught Aysha quickly: at some moment he recalled how light she was when he carried her out of wedding cart on wedding night; he lifted her with the same lightness. He carried her to the bed, moved the curtain away with his foot and blew out the candles by the head.

Aysha-begin had never been as tender as she was that night. It’s strange, why was everything different in the bedroom before. «I’ll spend every night here from now! – he promised to himself falling asleep after love pettings. And felt sorrow at once: – I’ll leave to Samarqand, and I don’t know how many weeks or months I’ll have to be separated, live without this joy. Isn’t it better to stay in Andijan? «

And he again remembered their first evening and first wedding night. Kissing and hugging Aysha he expected the same petting, words and actions from her. He wanted to enslave her heart and make her enslave his heart too. But Aysha-begin felt constrained in bed, responded to hot pettings carefully and fair, most likely – her nurses and tutoress had taught her that. Besides he remembered that: when she was undressing, a heavy golden bracelet with ruby stones fell from her thin wrist and rolled somewhere. She noticed it a little later, in the most unsuitable time, and began to worry:

– “Oh, where is my bracelet? There are such ruby stones! Master, please, wait, I’ll look for it.”

And she escaped his embraces.

Babur began to feel uneasy even now. He couldn't fall asleep for a long time; he looked at the tired and happy face of sleeping Aysha.

The sunny morning came. Together with night stars Babur's feelings disappeared, the feelings which were ready to change his plans last night. The husband and wife sat down to have their breakfast. Babur again thought about the web, which Ahmad Tanbal and Ali Dustbek were spinning around him. Last afternoon Babur told the messenger that he would definitely go to Samarqand. He told trusted people with Kasymbek in the lead to start concealed preparations for campaign. This morning he realized that he must not alter his promise.

Aysha-begim felt that her husband's mood had changed and she kept silence. Babur never looked at her after he glanced at the golden bracelet with ruby stones which heavily hung down from her skinny wrist.

– “Begin, so, did you bring yourself to go to Ura-Tyube?”

Aysha understood that the wish of Babur to go to Samarqand not only disappeared, but on the contrary it strengthened. She had separation for a few months in front of her – wasn't it a proof of absence of Babur's sincere love to her? With offence Aysha said:

– “My master, let first Samarqand belong to you, and then I'll go to my home city. But I don't want to go to Ura-Tyube...”

She said it in such a manner that Babur had a feeling that she doubted he would conquer Samarqand again. But he didn't explain anything. Leaving the harem he said coldly:

– “All right, begin, if God wishes, we'll continue our conversation in Samarqand...”

## SAMARQAND FINAL FIGHT

### I

Sultan Ali, who was on the throne of Samarqand and whom Babur wanted to drive out before Shaybani-khan, was not respected by anyone.

Good-for-nothing – had been whispered about him all over Bustan-saray palace. Bek Abu Yusuf Argun, trusted and close man, gave up on the young ruler; he was responsible for delivering new concubines to Sultan Ali's harem. About state affairs or fates of the family he preferred to speak in secluded room not far from the bath-

house with an open marble bath; through a special window in the wall (it had been made in the times of Sultan Makhmud and it was invisible from inside) the eighteen years old voluptuous boy liked to watch naked girls who were splashing in the water, he admired them drinking wine, looking forward to other joys, except watching.

And this time Zuhra-begim vainly tried to make him collect himself: wine and longing took his mind away, Sultan Ali murmured:

– “What? Are we in a siege again? Ah, not yet .... Conspirators want to open Samarqand gates for Babur? And my pir Hodja Yahya is leading them... let it be this way. We'll let Babur enter the city and fortress; we'll catch him, and burn his eyes with hut... hot iron spit. Ha-ha-ha ...”

Zuhra-begim in fury left her son.

She was for resistance to Babur. It was she who caused the elimination of conspirators, friends of Babur. Under her order, the defenders lured the front forces of Babur and destroyed them. But the main force of Babur and his name was impossible for her to defeat: Samarqand was doomed and her useless child, Sultan Ali, too.

Where to find support, oh Allah?!

Having come to her apartments, Zuhra-begim rushed about rooms which were lit by candles. She couldn't fall asleep until the very dawn.

For now she managed to foresee the course of events, she thought: those conspirators, who were on Babur's side on the last siege, have been caught – she managed to receive permission for it from drunken Sultan Ali. But anyway: the number of Samarqand people loyal to her, Zuhra-begim, continues to decrease. The property of beks-conspirators would be left to plunder, they would be punished hard, but this way... the number of unsatisfied people would increase! Moreover Hodja Yahya is very influential; it's not good to treat him badly: all the ecclesiastics are on his side, because he is the son of the famous Hodja Ahrar. On the will of such a man the entire crowd will rise with mullas and sheyhs in the lead, and such times will come, that it would be worse than time when Ulugbek had been beheaded!

The thoughts of Zuhra-begim turned to Sheybani-khan again and again. What a lucky, happy man! Bid his time, gathered a strong force, and recently conquered Buhara easily, now he could come to Samarqand any time. He proved to be an honest leader, a real warrior, a man who is not indifferent to women's charms. Three days ago one

dervish secretly delivered a message to Zuhra-begim from Sheybani-khan.

Begim unlocked a small golden box which she kept in a wall niche behind curtains, took out the letter and under candle light began to read it again.

On a thin crispy paper of honey color with a beautiful handwriting khan-nomad praised her mind and beauty, placed the emphasis on that she was still a young woman and neglected quite possible marriage and selflessly devoted her life to her son. But the most charming there was declaration of love to Zuhra-begim, the gentle hint at that he'd like to marry her; or what other meaning can these lines have:

*Your breathing of your lips is mine, oh mistress.*

*Your son - my son to be, I swear, oh mistress.*

Zuhra-begim imagined breath of a strong man on her face. For six years she had been alone, for six long years! She was like a beautiful flower but fading. Of course, she could get married; many persons interested could be - noble, rich, and strong in body, in mind and in fame: why not, she was the beloved wife of Sultan Makhmud, and people talked about her as of peerless beauty. But because of that she is still a widow, because both her son and husband belong to kings, - the tradition wanted her to marry for the second time with an equal man only.

And Sheybani-khan, who secretly asked her to marry him, isn't he of kings? «Your breathing of your lips is mine, oh mistress», - Zuhra-begim repeated and felt such a heat as if someone really embraced her and whispered ardently: «Lovely mistress! »

Begim stood up and came to the mirror. Because of sleepless nights she had blue marks under her eyes but her eyebrows looked like swallow wings. Her black eyes were shining. Her neck was smooth, white as marble, lips trembling with desire.

Sheybani-khan was about fifty already, he had wives and children, and Zuhra-begim knew that. «But who are these wives from steppes against me? I'll charm the khan, charm so well, that they would resign themselves to me, resign! »

The dervish had to come the next day. Come for the answer.

She took a paper and a feather-pen.

The candles have already burned down in their saucers, and she only now noticed that it was twilight already. Zuhra-begim pulled

back blue velvet curtains put her face against the chill of the approaching dawn.

She suddenly heard a piercing scream of a man from somewhere in the streets, going by the city fortress, and a woman began to wail.

Abu-Yusuf and other people of her son were hunting the conspirator-beks and robbed their houses. Zuhra-begim imagined how Samarqand people died under sabers and pikes at that moment. Insidious and intractable Samarqand people, they needed Babur. And she needed Sheybani. But what if Sheybani-khan while making a declaration of love to her, has insidious plans too? What if he would conquer Samarqand and Zuhra-begim would suffer the same fate as the woman who was wailing in the middle of the night?

She started feeling like a shill and scared. Once again she took the letter from Sheybani-khan who as if purposely answering her fears, wrote lines in the end of his letter:

*What is Samarqand for me without you? Tell me, lovely,  
Why a transitory body to stay without soul, oh lovely?*

And what is Samarqand for her without a husband, who would be a real ruler? «A transitory body», a dead body – that's what Samarqand will become if Sheybani-khan, strong, full of life won't come here and breathe heat of love into her widow soul.

Zuhra-begim shuddered; she again felt access of desire, which every man needs, especially the one of kings. She took a pen and began to write a letter to khan. The beginning should be simple - praise:

«Imam the saint, caliph<sup>97</sup> the lighted, a brave warrior for the real truth, embodying the will of God ...»

## II

Endless forces were everywhere: behind the first outline of Samarqand walls, in gardens, on the hills by the observatory of Ulugbek, on the banks of Obirahmat River. At the foots of Chaban-ata mountain and along the banks of Zeravskhan river – was the same situation, hundreds of yurts and tents.

Sheybani-khan, the warrior, the leader of the army, took the famous palace Chilsutun, which had been built by Ulugbek in a wonderful and famous Bogi-maydan garden. The top level of the

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<sup>97</sup> Caliph -the former title of the ruler of in certain Muslim countries

palace was made a spacious room with verandahs overlooking all four sides. There on a splendid decorated rise – throne powerful and menacing Sheybani-khan sits after afternoon prayer.

It's been reported that Sultan Ali with his retainers arrived from the city.

The small eyes of the khan looking not very powerful flashed with joy.

– “Call all our sultans here. Then bring Samarqand mirza.”

– “Master, but your throne is lower...”

– “My djaynamaz<sup>98</sup> is higher than any throne!”

– “Oh, that is really the truth, great khan!”

Sheybani-khan sat intentionally on the very edge of the light-brown carpet, sewed from soft camel wool.

When Sultan Ali was let in, the first thing that he noticed was humble pose of the menacing khan. He was sitting on the throne, and lower, having bent legs under the body, sultans were sitting, ten of them, - their clothes were not so plain as their master's. Sheybani-khan's clothes were completely undocked, and Sultan Ali had shining jewels which were on his chalma, golden and pearl threads on his chapan.

The eyes of the eighteen year old mirza uneasily jumped over one thing to another; there was delicate weakness in his fat, roundish figure. Following the advice of his mother and Abu Yusuf Argun he came here having left his forces in the fortress. He saw with what power the khan came to Samarqand and was afraid now.

How could he know that Abu Yusuf had come to an agreement with Sheybani-khan and following his direction he advised Sultan Ali to go to the khan? Today during dinner he made him quite drunk with maynob<sup>99</sup> and when Sultan Ali bent to bow, the carpet in front of him began to float. Mirza staggered with all his stout body, and but for Abu Yusuf, he would have fallen right on the carpet.

Sheybani-khan stood up to greet Mirza. The smell of maynob was very strong: the greenhorn was drunk; he dared to come here being drunk! Sheybani-khan gave a sign to seat Mirza lower than the son of the khan, Timur Sultan, and the son-in-law Djanibek.

Sultan Ali was full with respect for the khan.

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<sup>98</sup> Djaynamaz – handmade carpet

<sup>99</sup> Maynob – longstanding wine

On top of the red fur hat Sheybani put a white chalma on; the clothes under a light, short sleeve chakmon made of blue cloth, with golden buttons, was of green color – it was the color of muslims' flag. And the carpet ... «This steppe man is a devotee », – Sultan Ali thought. But how can Sultan Ali, the ruler of Samarcand, be given a place below others not so noble .... That's it! And Sultan Ali deliberately sat roughly, crossing his legs anyhow. The son of Sheybani-khan, Timur Sultan, looked at his neighbor with irritation.

– “Mirza, do you want to become as intimate to us as a son?” – Sheybani khan asked politely.

– “We're invited by you, halif the warrior, in order to make peace.”

– “Hasn't your noble mother arrived with you?”

– “Mother sent me”, - openly answered Sultan Ali, unwillingly displaying the level of his power.

– “But the noble woman intended to arrive ...”

– “Ah, women, what do they know about war and peace matters”, – Sultan Ali tried to correct his miss lubberly.

– “No, you should send a man after her, Mirza”, - the khan said blandly but in a tone which is not to be disobeyed.

Sultan Ali looked at Abu Yusuf who was sitting by his knees. He stood up immediately, and bowed to Sheybani-khan:

– “Great warrior let me go for Zuhra-begim immediately.”

Sheybani-khan blandly smiled to Abu Yusuf:

– “Of my best horses – one is yours, bek.”

– “Thank you, oh master!”

– “Bek, come back to the city”, - Mirza suddenly came to senses,

– “Inform Hodja Yahya about our will. If he doesn't arrive there where I am, Sultan Ali-mirza there won't be peace between us.”

– “You said the truth my amirzoda”, - graciously pronounced Abu Yusuf and hurried to follow the orders of royal men. Sheybani-khan looked at his sultans significantly.

– “You have a talk with Mirza for a while”, - he turned away and having entered the back door, went downstairs.

Sultan Ali looked around the faces of sultans – all of them expressed just animosity. Not wishing to stay with them, Mirza stood up and headed to the side door. One of the Turkestan sultans immediately jumped on his feet and blocked his way:

– “Mirza, you will not go anywhere from here, it's the order!”

A novker with impressive height appeared at the doors and put his arm on a handle of his dagger. Sultan Ali realized that he was caught in a trap. And he sobered up at once. The pale Samarcandian returned to his place.

Zuhra-begim with four slaves arrived in Bagi-maydan after a few hours. A silk scarf on her head and half round golden jewel on her forehead gave her a look like a bride. A colorful camisole, worn by royal women, with long sleeves seized her stout but still flexible figure. A very long lap of a white satin dress was spreading on the floor, held from two sides by the slaves.

Zuhra-begim was led to the hall which had been decorated and furnished on this occasion. The guest was noticed by an elder wife of Sheybani-khan, she was about fifty already.

– “What a shameless woman!” – she whispered to a young one who was next to her. – “What’s that? Missing a man she forgot how to observe the decencies, dressed up like a bride! Why not wait until matchmakers come and do everything according to traditions.... Let such a shame bypass us!”

When Zuhra-begim entered the throne hall, Sheybani was already there with a few retainers. Begim bowed to the khan expecting him to leave his throne to meet her at the foot of it, on a carpet line. But the khan seemed to be attached to his golden throne, he frostily said from there:

– “Welcome to our place, begim.”

Zuhra expected another reception. She hung her head and tears came off her eyes.

– “Master-halif, I’ve come to sacrifice myself to you! I’ll give you everything, my son, my honor and dignity... I believe in your nobility ... your letter...”

The face of Zuhra-begim was a hidden behind thick silk veil. It was hard to discern it. The khan looked at her hands, fingers with golden rings and precious stones, - trembling fingers, blood vessels could be seen on her, begim was growing old – there’s nothing to do with it. It’s not the nineteen year old wife, whom he took from Bukhara.

Sheybani recalled that Sultan Ali, the son of Zuhra-begim and the one who was intimidated by his sultans in another room at this moment, was eighteen already.

– “Don’t worry, begin”, - the khan said calmly, - “we know your cherished dream. By act of God your wishes won’t stay unaccomplished!”

And it was the only thing that the woman heard. Zuhra-begin and her slaves were taken to a small room and which was locked from outside.

### III

Nobody knew what Sheybani-khan was going to do with Samarqand’s people, but all commanders and retainers felt that some important days were to come. They were walking in small groups around Chilsutun palace.

And there was the poet Muhammad Salikh among them. He wore a silk chalma with graceful wrinkles; and the silk camisole with short sleeves suited him very much too. Of course steppe-sultans who never left telpeks<sup>100</sup> neither winter nor summer didn’t like the poet, the literary man and besides dressed up to taste. That’s why when occasion offers they keenly recollect the days when that dandy poet served Samarqand rulers, the luckless descendants of once menacing lame Timur.

Kambarbiy, the leader of naymans<sup>101</sup>, archly addresses Muhammad Salikh:

– “Mister poet, our loyal ally! From Samarqand the fashionable mother with her son arrived. Are you glad to see your Samarqand relative?”

– “Right worthy Kambarbiy, you should know that Zuhra-begin comes from the nayman tribe, so, most likely, she is your relative!”

Sultans of Mangits, Kungrats, Kushchi<sup>102</sup>, having heard the answer, began to laugh. This nayman-kipchak leader fancies himself over the other too much. He only calls his nomads as Uzbeks.

Kambarbiy burst with anger:

– “And you’d better not talk about relatives .... Aren’t you from Barlass Turks?”

The tribe of Barlass, which Timur came from, was the most hateful for Sheybani-khan. Muhammad Salikh served in the palace of Huseyn Baykhara, was a retainer of Sultan Ali-mirza, and then took

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<sup>100</sup> Telpeks – traditional hats

<sup>101</sup> The name of one of the tribes

<sup>102</sup> The names of tribes

the side of Sheybani. He revealed him some secrets, helped to conquer fortresses of Bukhara and Dabusiya, and became a favorite of the khan. But Kambarbiy considered Muhammad Salikh not reliable, and thought that he was able to betray and hated him.

The poet tried to laugh it off:

- "Kind Kambarbiy, now I'm one of the Uzbek Turks!"
- "Don't be cunning, poet! Uzbek is one thing, but Turk is another!"
  - "Why? All the Uzbek tribes are among Turks of Maverannahr."
  - "But we descend from the great Uzbek-khan. And you, poet are an offspring of these city renegades. Don't forget it!"
    - "Mister Kambarbiy, my ancestors lived in Turkestan city, and Uzbeks have a proverb «Our paternal land is Turkestan». Does such a proverb exist or not?"
      - "Well, it does. So what?"
      - "If your paternal land is Turkestan, then your ancestors and my ancestors descend from one root. You, mister Kambarbiy, should count not only from one branch, but from the root, the general root of the tree. Then you will see that Uzbek-khan lived about two hundred years ago, and our Turkestan existed a thousand years before Uzbek-khan. And the name "Uzbek" existed among our people long before Uzbek-khan."
        - "Oh right!" - Kambarbiy didn't believe.
        - "I assure you! I grew up in Khorezm, have read ancient books there, books which you don't like so much. Do you know that Khorezmshah Muhammad, well, the one who fought against Chingizskhan, named one of his sons Uzbek? If he gave his son this name then this name was in favor in those days already! And do you know what it means? Uzbek means - «master for oneself», «independent». The tribes, led by our master, warrior Sheybani-khan, don't call themselves Uzbeks because it's the name of Uzbek-khan or the son of Khorezmshah. It's on the contrary: those adopted this beautiful name from Turks..."

- "Well, enough! This poet again bends to the Turk side! - Kambarbiy said with irritation facing the sultans who were listening to their dispute attentively."

- "How can it be otherwise? You've admitted that your paternal land is Turkestan. And Turkestan means «the land of Turk»."

– “God forbid, this poet will make us descendants of Rum Turks!”

– “I’m not going to do it, mister Kambarbiy and dear sultans. Rum Turks... they have their own history. But Turks of Maverannahr lived in these valleys long before forming of Anatolian Rum. If you have read «Shahname» the poet Firdousi testifies that thousands of years ago the lands to the south of... Horasan were called Iran, and to this side of Horasan, to the north – Turan. Our master Sheybani-khan knows history very well. Our apostolic imam<sup>103</sup> while studying in Bukhara medrese knew the verses of Navoi and Lutfi by heart and wrote gazelles in Turkic language. Want to listen to one?”

And the simple-minded sultans had to listen to the cunning fellow:

*I fell from horse of missing; my darling came with sympathy,  
And Sheybani recovered well, as darling came with sympathy.*

– “These verses of our khan are not Turkic, they are Uzbek!” – Kambarbiy didn’t want to give up.

– “All the Turk poets wrote verses in this language! Turkic language of Navoi and Uzbek language of Sheybani-khan are the same language. And now our souls have to unite as well, dear sultans. The degenerates of Timur said: «Those are Turks, and these are Uzbeks» - and they separated tribes and the people. And now our apostolic imam, Khalif the warrior, the second Iskander, will unite all of us again. I wish the great khan would accomplish his goal which is pleasing to God!”

The dispute ended here. The poet left them with his head raised proudly.

Kupaybiy, the leader of the kushchi tribe, looked at Kambarbiy and said:

– “Did you see them, spawns of Sart? It’s impossible to beat them in disputes!”

– “If not with disputes then we’ll win them with a saber, – Kambarbiy said loudly intentionally.”

The Sultans laughed together.

By the evening Hodja Yahya arrived, he was escorted by five or six myurids; he was the last one who Sheybani expected to put up his plan.

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<sup>103</sup> Imam –Muslim religious leader

While dismounting Hodja Yahya was too much in a hurry and his legs became entangled in the leather stirrups. Myurids helped his master to get off ...

Hodja Yahya wore a white magnificant chalma; he approached with slightly bended head to the throne where Sheybani-khan was seating. He said with authority in a voice with which he used to read Koran sonorously and with a singing accent:

– “Assalomu aleykum<sup>104</sup>, brave khan! The gates of Samarqand are open in front of you ...”

Sheybani interrupted him and noticed ironically:

– “Was it you who have opened the gates of Samarqand for us?”

– “Everything happens under God’s will, not otherwise.”

– “We are accomplishing God’s will, others by their will wanted to give Samarqand to Babur!”

All the dignity of the pir disappeared. He realized that it was too dangerous to exchange sharp remarks.

– “Man is weak, master.... If we are guilty of something, forgive us. I came here to beg to be excused ...”

– “You came? Or you were brought?”

Hodja Yahya shed tears.

– “Take khodja upstairs”, - the khan ordered, - “and place him next to his favorite mirza.”

When Hodja Yahya had been taken away Sheybani immediately called Mulla Abdurahim, an old man of sixty, his closest advisor.

None of the grandees on the council knew what they were talking about. Many sultans were surprised that Sheybani-khan didn’t hurry to enter the open Samarqand gates. Why delay, why not enter it like a wind and conquer the desired center of Maverannahr, where for so long and hard Uzbeks of Sheybani were going?

Maybe the council was gathered because of this reason, in order to make this decision finally? Anyway, when Sheybani-khan entered the hall through the main entrance, the curiosity of the present people reached the highest degree. All the grandees jumped to their feet and bowed to the khan. He slowly rose to the throne and with legs crossed froze. Mulla Abdurahim sat to the right of the khan. After a short silence mulla Abdurahim read a surah<sup>105</sup> from the Koran – to wish favorable course of affairs, wished khan, the warrior for the truth, to

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<sup>104</sup> Assalomu aleykum – greetings

<sup>105</sup> Surah – any of the 114 chapters of the Koran

accomplish all his valuable aspirations. And silence fell again. And the mulla again broke the silence, finally turning to the fact of the matter.

– “Our great imam<sup>106</sup>, the present warrior-calif<sup>107</sup>, blest Shaybani khan, thinks not only about occupation of the city, wallowed in wickedness. Our sovereign intends to retribute religious enemies, he leads us on the sacred ways, pierced by the prophet Muhammad himself. If our sovereign were a man to think only about wealth... Samarqand would have to fork up. But great Shaybani khan is the second Iskander<sup>108</sup> in his wisdom, he thinks about triumph of faith and justice first of all.”

– “He does, indeed!” – Muhammad Salih, who sat a little lower than Abdulrahim Mullah, confirmed in a small but distinct voice.

– “We can see by the descendants of Timur’s origin”, – Abdulrahim mullah proceeded without paying attention to the poet, - “how hateful things can happen, how miserable fate can overtake a country if royal men consign faith and justice to oblivion. Ulugbek was killed by Abdul Latif’s order, while he was Abdul Latif’s own father. Husayn Bayqarah killed his own grandson Mumin Mirza<sup>109</sup> in Herat. Sultan Ali – here he is sitting with us – wanted to catch and kill his elder brother, Baysunqur, who nevertheless managed to escape; then, Baysunqur caught his younger...” - the mullah smiled sarcastically”, - little brother and nearly went along to put out his eyes, you know, in such a familiar way, but our guest, mirza, slipped away, having bribed an executioner. The court of royal men in Samarqand became an abode of betrayal, hypocrisy and depravity! The Koran strictly prohibits Muslims from drinking wine. But this young mirza... - do you see him, there? – Look carefully – he thinks that he has a right to come to the holy imam, to the warrior of veritable faith in a befuddled with this forbidden drink condition! Our holy imam knows as he had before, that this... worthless mirza took the primrose path from his youth up, and now you, sultans<sup>110</sup>, received evidence...”

Kipchak Kupakbiy cried from his place:

– “Hang the profligate and drunkard!”

– “The young mirza is certainly guilty”; – Muhammad Salih said nodding his head in a blaming way. – “But it is his father, who is

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<sup>106</sup> Imam is the supreme spiritual person in Islam

<sup>107</sup> Calif is a title of successors of Prophet Muhammad as rulers of the Islamic world

<sup>108</sup> Alexander the Great

<sup>109</sup> Mirza is a royal prince: used as a title after a name (from Persian “son of a lord”)

<sup>110</sup> Sultan is a sovereign of a Muslim country

guiltier, Sultan Makhmud. He was jolly well dissolute! He scorned the faith. He indulged in lust with women and boys. Miserable Samarqand people were afraid of letting their young sons out of doors, hid them, like girls, at the women's part of their houses..."

– "I say: the son beat his father-profligate!" – Kambarbiy said.

– "You are talking about the father, but look at the mother of the mirza!"

Kupakbiy ran risks. Everybody held their breath. The rumor that Shaybani khan was going to marry Zukhra begin reached many people. Khan knew that the marriage to this woman will impair his name in the eyes of sultans, but couldn't forget begin's<sup>111</sup> hands with swollen veins. Abdulrahim Mullah, who knew the intentions of the khan, hurried to finish with rumors and carried on with the angry question-like remark of the Kipchak sultan:

– "Wives of royal men are infected with their wickedness too. The mother of this mirza seems to be ready, willing and able to please her lust. Hasn't she brought her son into our hands for this purpose?"

One of the sultans suggested at once with a sigh of relief:

– "Such a vile woman is worth to be tied to the tail of a running mare till this reprobate is dead."

Another one recommended another type of execution:

– "To push her into a bag and to throw it down from the highest minaret!"

Shaybani listened to the terrible suggestions of this kind in silence. At last he gave a glance at Abdulrahim mullah, and silence among the sultans was established by his sign.

The khan began his speech, sedate, weighty, and cogent. Everybody was still, while listening, as if spellbound, especially when Shaybani proved with mass of new examples the fall, depravity and abandonment of religious faith of Timur's descendants, who ruined the country that had been glorious in the old days. Suddenly the khan turned towards Khodja Yahya<sup>112</sup>:

– "I say, pir, a spiritual adviser of these profligates was your father, Khoja Akhrar, the "saint", as he called himself. The royal men depended on his spiritual power. And what a treasure your father saved up – was all of it by fair means, pir?"

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<sup>111</sup> In Turkic language "begin" is a title equal to "khanum", which means "Mrs." or "Miss"

<sup>112</sup> Khoja is a title of honored ecclesiastic persons in Islam

We know that you inherited a lot of gold. It has helped you to have Samarqand in hand for already eleven years. A fish rots from the head. As pir such as murid<sup>113</sup>. This young profligate, mirza, Sultan Ali, is your murid; you have vouched for him before God and taken him in hand!

Having pointed with his finger at Sultan Ali and Khodja Yahya in turns, Shaybani poked his finger at the floor:

– “And there is another profligate down there, a woman, shameless and impudent, came here to get a husband. You are such a pir! You have betrayed your mirza-murid and wanted to hand Samarqand to Babur. But this murid, having betrayed his pir, came to me. What a city: nothing but betrayers and liars! One pulls here, the other – there. The royal man pulls to one side, the spiritual head - to another. They are ready to eat each other up! Our Prophet Muhammad was both spiritual leader and emperor, and the commander. Who does not follow the path of the Prophet, will be thrown into the abyss like this pir and this mirza!”

Speaking like this Shaybani meant his other obstinate retainers too, because some of them grumbled secretly: “Our khan is not content with the throne and has proclaimed himself an imam – the supreme spiritual person and calif – God’s vicar”. Shaybani, having watched how the things were going on in Maverannahr<sup>114</sup> intently and for a long time, understood well how a state weakens because of the government such as Khoja Akhrar. “He will not let it be in his own country!

At the time of education in Bukhara medresah – that is a kind of religious school for Muslims - he learned Sharia, the canonical law, based on the Koran, and the Sufi way of religious self-perfection, Tariqa, well, furthermore, there was no one who knew hadiths<sup>115</sup> better than khan and read the Koran more expressively, among those, who surrounded Shaybani now. What kind of khan, the leader of armies, would he be without the faith, which unites sultans and the common people of different tribes around him? And what kind of imam and calif would he be without strong troops, obedient to his will? Warrior-calif – this kind of unity is right!

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<sup>113</sup> Murid is a novice, tied up with his pir by a spiritual vow (Islam)

<sup>114</sup> Maverannahr is the Arabian name for the interfluve of Amu darya and Syr darya rivers, including such cities as Samarqand, Bukhara and others (7 cent.)

<sup>115</sup> Hadith is the body of tradition and legend about Mohammed and his followers, used as a basis of Islamic law

– Our enemies in Samarcand were strong as a seven-headed dragon. What strong men were conquered by this dragon! But our thoughts were pure and intentions pious. And the Almighty, the Almighty Himself, lured the dragon out of his den and brought him to us, to our hands, saying: “Do anything you want”. Gate of the great Samarcand opened before us without a battle by the will of Allah.

The retainers of the khan looked as if they understood what a great victory was won by them only now; really, Samarcand, the great Samarcand surrenders without a battle, the sovereign and spiritual leader of the city came giving them up to Shaybani khan by themselves. Allah is almighty, He really is, and Shaybani khan is really the warrior of true faith, beloved by God, that's why he could carry out such a piece of work so wisely and skillfully.

Mullah Abdulrahim declared:

– “Let our holiest imam live a thousand years!”

The others jumped from their seats too:

– “Praise the Second Iskander!”

– “A thousand thanks to the minion of God!”

– “Let the warrior-calif live long as the world exists!”

Sultan Ali and Yahya Khoja rose to their feet pale with fear, they could hardly stand. And their fear was reasonable. It would take only uttering a word by Shaybani khan and his fellow-fighters would tear the aliens from Samarcand into pieces.

At a sign of the khan praises stopped, and everybody took his seat again. Shaybani khan pointed at Khoja and mirza:

– “There would be no sin to kill them after making them a thousand of torments. But we will show to the world once again what sort of power should have those who follow the faith and justice – the merciful power. Blood of the aliens will not be shed, they are granted with life!”

Mirza and Khoja having already lost every hope to save their lives, bent into fawning bows. Sultan Ali was not haughty anymore, and Yahya Khoja lost his dignity, too. The last one even had tears in his eyes:

– “Oh, lord, let God multiply the years of your life!”

– “Wait!” – The khan raised his voice, – “Yahya Khoja, a profit-seeker, a person who forgot about piety! To sanctify your soul you

have to make a hadj<sup>116</sup>... Let him take necessary things and go with his two sons. Kupakbiy, make sure he is not later than tomorrow morning!"

- "Right you are, master!"

- "Well, and this young mirza", - Shaybani khan continued looking at Sultan Ali, wanted to assume the name of our son. "All right, it is a good thing – to draw a person who forgot the commandments of true faith out of harm's way. Timur khan, let him be with your people."

The well-built son of the khan gave Sultan Ali a glare expressing disgust, but a word of his father was the law. Sultan Timur bowed to his father.

- "If he behaves well he will be honored with awards - added Shaybani, - if badly – will lose his head."

Who was ought to guess, he guessed that Sultan Ali will die very soon.

Now it was necessary to seal the fate of Zukhra begin, locked up downstairs.

Shaybani khan heard from hearsay about the beauty of Zukhra begin for a long time and he decided to marry her as gunchachi - a wife for a time as it was allowed by customs.

Of course, in the letter, which he interspersed with a few rhymed lines, there was not a single word about gunchachi: let the vain Samarqand widow think that she really be the lady of his heart and mistress of his actions. But the disappointment he had felt today was not the only feeling in his soul, some kind of remorse was scratching the soul of the khan, because he misled the begin with his poems and letter, in simple words, he deceived, swindle her. It was important for him that the sultans at the council spoke about Zukhra begin with disgust, as if convincing their khan in the depravity and dishonesty of the begin. Conscience was calming down. "Zukhra begin herself turned out to be a bad woman, it means, she is worthy of the delusion, - the khan thought, - "Certainly, I will not let the sultans execute her, no. But the union with the sultans is dearer to me than anyone, even if she is a real beauty. Her intention was to get married. So I will keep my word, I'll find her a husband".

Shaybani's look stopped on a thick pock-faced man that sat far away from honourable places, which were close to the khan. Mansur

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<sup>116</sup>Hajj is a pilgrimage to Mecca that every Muslim is required to make at least once in his life, provided he has enough money and the health to do so

Bakhshi – he is a sultan for Zukhra begin. He is a shabby sultan, but besides his military affairs, he practiced healing shamanism as well. “He could somehow with thunderous pounding of a drum, exorcise demons from the body of a patient, intimidating them with all kinds of profanity, for what he was called “an intimidator”. This sultan was also famous for his abnormal fury of his male flesh, which could not be endured by any of his wives – they died or ran away in a year or two.

– “Mansur Bakhshi, you have no luck with your wife again, right?” – Shaybani asked the sultan-intimidator; – “The begin that is downstairs came as you could see, in the bride’s dress. Why not you marry her?”

The intimidator jumped up from the rug and broke into a smile from ear to ear and bowed low to the khan:

– “Oh lord, guardian of my life, I will die for you, I’m ready, ready to get married!”

There was a burst of laugh. All of the sultans were pleased that Shaybani khan untied this knot neatly, too.

– “Our holy imam acts wisely, ah, so wisely... Oh, and Mansur-intimidator will do hug well Zukhra-hussy...”

– “They match each other, they really do...”

Shaybani began his speech, and laughs and cries ceased in a moment:

– “We will celebrate the wedding in Samarqand. We will go there keeping the order...”

Khan visited Samarqand many times and knew the city well; he thought in advance how his troops get into the capital and how they settle there. Commanders have received positive instructions, raised the army, and five thousands of nukers<sup>117</sup> of Shaybani Shah<sup>118</sup> began quickly passing through the gate of the Chorrah. At the same time, hundreds of people were escaping through another gate, the Suhangaron that was on the opposite side of the Chorrah. Babur was in Shakhrisabz. His partisans rushed to Shakhrisabz.

Not everybody could escape. Shaybani khan’s soldiers were astride, their horses were quick like wind, they caught many people, looted to their heart’s content, and anybody resisted were killed right there.

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<sup>117</sup> A nuker is a soldier of khan’s personal guard, a bodyguard

<sup>118</sup> Shah is an oriental monarch

The robbery was especially strong at night. Perhaps only one rich family of Yahya Khoja was safe: the whole night they were guarded by soldiers of Kupakbiy. Guard headed by sultan of Kipchak himself watched Yahya Khoja with his two sons and trusted servants pulling out chests of gold from different places in the yard and house and packing them. In the morning the servants loaded five roofed bullock carts and about a dozen camels. Three wives of the khoja climbed onto the loaded carts, the servants led the camels by the reins; his bodyguards, along with Yahya Khoja and his sons were a mounted group, and after sad farewell with Samarcand, a mighty pir in former times made his way to the south. The way of Yahya Khoja went through the mountains. But the caravan couldn't go further than a narrow mountain gorge. At twilight, before the overnight stay time, on the river bank, Kupakbiy killed all the «pilgrims» to a man – the pir and his sons, and his bodyguards.

Only women and servants with other catch were distributed among his foremen and nukers. The same night Kupakbiy brought half of the looted wealth to the treasury of the khan, who ordered to kill Yahya Khoja away from human eyes.

Having heard about the killing Sultan Ali realized that he will face the same fate. He decided to run at all costs. One day, under a cloak of thick autumn mist he and his two bodyguards managed to slip unnoticed from the eastern gate of the Samarcand fortress. He galloped towards Panjikent on a fast horse. But before he could get very far, on the bank of the river Siyab that flowed ten miles eastward from Samarcand, Timur caught the escapee. The head of the worthless was showed to the warrior-calif.

Zukhrabegim had already tasted the first blows in wedlock with Mansur bakhshi when the beheaded body of her son was brought to her. Her cry was heartrending; she tore her clothes, beat herself on the head with her fists, and covered her face with bleeding scratches.

The winners looked at it and enjoyed, as there is nothing that amuses them more than a spectacle of a suffering defeated enemy.

## V

The autumn wind drove flowing water, carrying along a shawl of fallen leaves.

Several hundreds of armed horsemen crossed Zaravshan yellowed with leaves; it was thirty miles to the south-east from

Samarqand. They hurried to Siyab; rode quickly, but attentively and as quietly as possible. They tried to avoid villages or to slip by them most unnoticed. Peasants they ran against strived to hide quickly themselves, because the horsemen were taken for soldiers of Shaybani khan, and already thrown a scare into the whole neighbourhood.

But, to all appearance, the horsemen themselves were much afraid of the troops of Shaybani. When they crossed Siyab in the darkness, some horses stuck in the boggy soil. The nukers quietly urged them trying to pull them onto a firmer ground, and became stuck in it themselves. Cane reeds scratched their hands and faces. One of the nukers swore up loudly not being able to stand it anymore.

An imperious voice pulled him up at once:

– “Why are you shouting? Do you want to bring a disaster upon us?”

It was Babur’s voice. The nuker implored:

– “Have a mercy on me, lord, I can’t move this rascal!”

At that cold night steam was over the Siyab which collects waters from hot springs. It was impossible to discern the dry land from the bog. Babur couldn’t lose a moment and said decisively:

– “That will do, we have to leave the horses here!”

Kasimbek supported it:

– “I’ll give my own, spare horses to those who lost theirs.”

– “So many horses and camels died on the passes, but mine overcame them all. And now he has to be lost here?” – said Takhir sadly (he was one of the nukers in this small detachment).

– “Our lives are in danger now!” – Babur replied.

Takhir got on the horse, one of those that the armourbearer of Kasymbek led by reins. Two other nukers had the good fortune to get on Babur’s spare amblers.

There was no opportunity to spare the horses anymore! Samarqand was close. They had to come near it as quickly and secretly as possible. If they showed themselves to Shaybani khan’s people, an alarm would be given and the whole enemy forces they could not stand against.

All summer Babur rode in the mountains, took a field from Shakhrisabz to Hissar, then to Zaravshan source – the banks of Fandarya. Beks, officials and nobles of Samarqand with their nukers went to Khosrov shakh, the ruler of Hissar. Many people who came

from Andijan with Babur returned to the Fergana Valley, unable to stand the fast and as it seemed not-promising any success passages from place to place. It was very likely that confidential informants of Shaybani khan told him that the army of Babur was becoming small. Khan was convinced that Babur (how many nukers are left with him, about a thousand?) would not stand the torments in the mountains and go back to Andijan. Or he would seek the protection of his uncle, Olach khan, who was a governor somewhere far away, over the Issyk Kul Lake. Anyway, now Babur couldn't attack him, whose troops were five times bigger and could grow quickly and many times in comparison with existing ones. Shaybani left about five hundred people for sacking in ravaged Samarcand, and with the major part of the troops he set up a camp a bit more to the west from the city in the borough called Khoja Dydar.

Babur dared to take a dangerous, risky step: to attack Samarcand, occupy it before Shaybani khan's face when he was not suspecting anything. It had to be done with a swift thrust. If Shaybani khan's spies informed their master, the khan would let Babur come near the city with his several hundreds of weak soldiers and then strick with all his might. Besides, there were more soldiers in the very city than with Babur. And if Babur got into Shaybani khan's hands, he would certainly die! The warrior-calif thirsting to become a founder of a new dynasty in Maverannahr, vowed to annihilate mercilessly the descendants of Timur. Babur knew it. He decided to fight to the death and in no case to get into the khan's hands alive...

In the darkness his detachment got over a lot of aryks<sup>119</sup>, streams, and flooded gullies. Through the uninhabited gardens in autumn they got out to the Puli Magakh Bridge. It was already very close to the city. Two days before there were sent some faithful nukers here, who in advance made high ladders to get over the Samarcand walls. At that moment about eighty nukers dismounted and took the ladders and quietly walked to a high steep. The rest of the nukers and Babur himself slinked to the Feruz city gate, hid in the shadows of trees and a hill opposite them.

There was not a sound to be heard around. Only the first cocks suddenly gave a voice from the distance. The sky seemed to pressed dark night clouds straight to the city walls, which were dimly discerned and went somewhere upwards.

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<sup>119</sup>An irrigation ditch/channel

Kasimbek, who stood, as always, near to Babur, was panting. Babur himself felt a tremor in his body.

The walls of Samarqand! Four months ago, under clouds of much the same night Babur went up to them, expecting Yahya Khoja to open the gate. They were detected and fired; upon to groans of wounded men, to mocking cries of enemies they had to leave then. Deception, perfidy, ambushes, attacks from behind... Death of friends and foes... And this was all his life of a warrior, politician, who decided to unite Maverannahr.

In order not to get into the trap again and not to let his supporters in the city down, Babur didn't send word about his coming to the walls of Samarqand.

He decided to rely only on himself and his reckless nukers. Babur knew exactly that he had two hundred and forty of them at that moment. And five hundred ones were inside the city. And five thousand were overby.

Who set a trap here? Did Babur do it for Shaybani or did Shaybani do it for Babur?

Babur's beks tried to dissuade him from this unprecedented daring so many times, argued that the most reasonable way was to turn back.

But giving up his plan meant to return to Andijan completely crushed; it meant to live submitting to the will of Ahmad Tanbal. It was not better than leading a nomad's life in his own country in autumn dampness and winter frosts. But he was not a nomad! He preferred a fight, in which he could die or fight like a lion, winning a victory over Shaybani khan.

Like a lion and as a fox, he would be able to escape the traps and catch the enemy by surprise. It was the centre of their hopes.

Babur was all ears with his whole being.

Night. Silence. His own heart was leaping out – it was clip-clop of the horse named his Fate...

## VI

At first Takhir didn't feel the heaviness of the ladder while the nukers passed round the ancient cemetery Chakardiz on a flat place. But the heaviness began to grow quickly, causing stumbling and muffled swearing while they, trying not to make noise, began climbing down to the bottom of the deep ravine. With a superstitious fear they

passed the mouth of the cave: no one dared to peep in it even in the daytime, but they had to... pass the cave... at night... and up again, clinging to withered thorns. A part of the city wall was visible from the ravine, and it seemed even higher from here than it was in reality.

Dripping with sweat, at last the soldiers brought the ladders under the very walls.

Nuyan Kukaldash, their leader, became still, letting the men rest... The brick wall was a good poplar's height; the top of the wall was so wide, that, as Nuyan knew, people there could freely go in pairs. What was there at that moment?

Who was there? It seemed quiet, with no torches, no lights. At night the frozen guards seemed to have gone down into the guardhouse.

If it was so – it was the time!

Jigits (skilfull horsemen) reservedly raised the ladders on the rack and slowly set it against the edge of the wall.

– "Well, go up", - whispered Nuyan Kukaldash to the nukers.

Those who stood nearby lowered their gaze. It was no joke: the wall, a lenght of thirty arshin<sup>120</sup> once fallen from it, one will never come out if alive. And what if the guards caught sight of them? Whom will the rocks and arrows fly to? Besides, the ladder can be easily pushed away.

Nuyan Kukaldash first put his foot on the crossbar.

– "Anyway everybody will have to die some day. So, be jigits, be brave!"

Takhir began to climb the second ladder; it was also stable, able to withstand many people. After them the others began climbing too. Nuyan Kukaldash quickly reached the top. He looked around. No one was there. And indeed on a wide floor along the wall even a horseman could ride.

Takhir hid himself in the shadow of the projecting merlon. He helped another nuker to come up and whispered:

– "Where's the ax? Got one?"

The nuker pulled the ax out of his belt and handed it to Takhir.

– "Hide, keep closer to the merlons!" - ordered Nuyan. If it were not for the merlons on the walls, people easily could be observed from below, from the yard. In the darkness which was intensified by shadows of the big projecting merlons, it was possible to gather all

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<sup>120</sup> Arshin is a unit of length, it is equal 0.71 metres

their little detachment, and then making quick dashes to move to the flooring down to the gate. But in a certain distance on the descent there were guardhouses. When they approached the first one, someone from the inside asked lazily in Kipchak dialect.

– “Hey, Irinstay, is that you? Why are you late? We are tired of waiting for you...”

Everyone became still. Takhir, tightly clenching his ax with both hands, replied:

– “Yes, it's me... Wait a bit, I...”

The guard seemed failing to recognize the voice and asked anxiously:

– “Who are you?”

Nuyan Kukaldash rushed to the door and when it opened showing the figure of the guard he put a dagger to use. The death cry of the guard could wake up the guard below.

– “Takhir, go to the gate! To the gate, be quick!” – Nuyan Kukaldash with a dozen soldiers rushed to the next guardhouse, and Takhir, jumping from floor to floor, passed two more guardhouses (their doors were closed) and in a few moments was on the ground by the massive Feruz gate.

Protection of this gate was entrusted to Fazyl Tarkhan. Most of his one hundred and fifty nukers dispersed and went home. In the guardhouses at the top and at the gate there were only about twenty men, and even they were dozing. Not many of them had time to wake up and grab the weapon: Nuyan acted swiftly. Takhir having run with the ax to the gate, set to break a lock as huge as a head of a horse. The first blows were futile. By this time Fazyl Tarkhan already appeared, he lived nearby, and his nukers with burning torches in their hands, too. Two nukers noticed a man, bothering with a lock - two arrows struck the planks of the gate just above and slightly right of the Takhir's head. A fight started at the gate. They were fighting with daggers, swords, spears and just fists. Nuyan Kukaldash excelled in agility and skill, so Fazyl Tarkhan was defeated with a stab of his sword.

And meanwhile Takhir furiously struck now the lock and now chains and now rings which held the chains of the bridge across the moat, with the ax again and again. Rings and chains clattering fell to the ground, and then finally the lock, too.

Beyond the pinion wall there was a wide moat filled with water. While Takhir was opening the gate wider, jigits unwound chains and threw the bridge.

Babur and Kasymbek with nukers stood ready at the opposite side of the moat. As soon as the gate opened and the bridge was thrown over the moat, they rushed with drawn swords on horseback. Survived servants and nukers of Fazyl Tarkhan broke into a run. Kasymbek leading a small detachment went after them...

Then the things went even faster. Nuyan Kukaldash attacked the Chorrah gate - from behind, from the city! Another detachment, which Babur was leading, struck, like a storm, the guard at the gate Suzangaron. They had to capture all four gates: one never knew when Shaybani khan could come with his army.

Soon the noise of the battle spread over the entire city. Janvafo, the governer, was sweetly sleeping in the luxurious apartments, taken away from Yahya Khoja, not far away from the Shayhzoda gate.

Awakened by noise and screams, he could not recover from fright at once; he ran outside and ran into the remaining guard who was to protect the gate, but broken and pursued now by a numerous army of his enemy, who already occupied the city – that was to all appearance! It was hard to understand where the enemy was and where the friends were: everybody was shouting, swearing, cursing and... Escaping.

Janvafo Governor decided immediately: he turned his horse to the gate Shayhzoda; the only gate Babur's people had not reached yet. The gate was quickly opened by his order; the governor slipped out and, along with a hundred of dazed, stupefied nukers, rushed to the camp of the khan with a message about Babur's army of many thousands, which occupied Samarqand.

Samarqand townsmen, who spent all night in fear, without lighting a fire and much less showing their faces into the streets, didn't understand what was happening in their city. Only at the dawn from heralds and instantly spread rumors they knew that Babur freed them from the alien khan. There were many people who were discontented with Shaybani khan. Aliens looted houses of artisans frequently; crops of peasants were trampled by herds of the nomads' troops. Mullahs, the supporters of Yahya khoja, who was foully murdered with his two sons in the mountains, called the artisans and peasants under the black banner of vengeance. Officials of the former rulers, those who

lost their power and privileges with Shaybani's victory, also were seized with a desire for revenge. Dozens of thousands people joined two hundred and forty nukers of Babur. And reprisal began. Crowds of people ran around the city. The spectacle was terrible.

Hiding people of the khan-calif were dragged out to the streets, some of them were caught up in flight and using knives, axes, sticks and stones and killed and killed and killed. The righteous popular indignation, (ordinary people were taking revenge for their grievances and sufferings of ten years prescription) was mixed with a violence, cruelty of those who lost the ability to cause offences and suffering for a time.

The sun had already risen when the whole Shaybani khan's army in perfect battle-array showed beyond the pinion wall. The bridges had been raised. All the gates had been locked and guarded reliably. The reprisal in the city was still going on...

## VII

Takhir ran about the city all night. The joy of victory took off the feeling of weariness. Only sometimes he was tormented by hunger. Finally he broke down and with the permission of Kasymbek went to the row of stalls where flat cake was sold – it was already late morning, but still no hope to have a meal: the violence in the streets and squares was still lasting.

In the deserted marketplace a large crowd surrounding a few nukers of the khan, was pelting them to death with stones. Four of them were already breathless in pools of blood, the others closing their faces, were groaning. There was a boy of twenty among them, his shirt was shreddy, and he himself was covered all over with bleeding bruises and wounds, knelt swaying and pleading for mercy. Running into the crowd on horseback Takhir shouted:

– “Hey, people, listen to me! Babur Mirza issued an order! Capture those who surrender! Do not shed blood too much! This guy is also a Muslim! People stop! And we are also nukers! Are nukers guilty? Their khans are! Stop, will you! Execute the order of Babur Mirza!”

Then two other horsemen came through the crowd. Takhir gradually calmed the crowd down with their help.

Being flushed he forgot what he had come here for and wanted to take them away as captives, those three survivors, the panting nukers of Shaybani. At that time a tall man shouted from the crowd:

– “Wait, jigit<sup>121</sup>... Aren’t you Takhir?”

Takhir looked at this man. The tall, sinewy man with a yellowish mustache was holding a hefty cudgel in his hands. And Takhir remembered the events of three years’ prescription, when in the same street he apportioned hungry Samarqand people with bread.

– “Mamat! Why, you are with a cudgel? Aren’t you a kipchak?”

– “Why, brother, stooges of Shaybani caused a lot of evil to all the tribes. They killed my wife, poor woman!”

Takhir recalled his conversation with this person about Robia and his heart ached again. Having sent the captives with his horsemen from Babur’s guard, Takhir jumped out of the saddle and drew Mamat aside.

– “Mamat-aka (this addressing means “elder brother”), do you remember my request?”

– “I knew that you would ask me, brother... I called you because of that... You know, my poor wife turned out to have known something about that girl you were talking about. She was from Andijan, right?”

– “From Kuva.”

– “Well, from Andijan in short, from that place. She was stolen and brought here. Then a Turkmen merchant bought her and took her away.”

– “And what, what was then?”

– “Then this merchant with Shaybani khan moved to Samarqand.”

– “With that girl? Is she alive?”

– “She is!”

Takhir squeezed Mamat’s hand and asked with panting:

– “Her name is... She is Robia, isn’t she?”

– “My late wife didn’t know her name.”

– “But has she met her?” – And when Mamat nodded, he started to shake him: – “Where has she met her? Come on, tell me, quickly!”

– “At Fazyl Tarkhan’s house... Tonight your people struck him...”

– Mamat ran cudgel across his throat.

– “But where, where is his house?”

– “Come along, I’ll show you!”

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<sup>121</sup> Jigit means a skilful horseman in the Central Asia

Takhir mounted his horse and seated Mamat behind him. Mamat threw the cudgel away and holding onto Takhir's chakmon<sup>122</sup>, began to direct the rider along the winding streets and alleys.

"God Almighty, help me, do not break my heart! Let her be alive at least! I implore you, the Almighty!" He had been vainly seeking for Robia for six years and already assured himself that he was destined not to find her, began to get used to this idea, but here was a sudden flash of lightning of hope, and those long six years didn't matter anymore. The hope made him happy, but tormented at the same time, because it could go out as fast as lightning. And the thought of such possibility echoed in his heart with an acute pain.

- "That's the house!" - Mamat pointed at the two-storied brick building, with a large garden behind it.

The gate into the yard and into the garden were open wide, armed soldiers of Babur carried out forged chests with ornate decorations, scarlet patterned carpets, packets, parcels and tableware. Fazyl was a wealthy merchant, closely connected to Shaybani khan: his property was ordered to be withdrawn for benefit of Babur.

At the gate Takhir dismounted, even forgetting to thank Mamat, and without hearing the words of familiar nukers addressed to him rushed directly to the courtyard, the women's part of the house - or ichkari - the second part of the yard.

A bloody dead body of Fazyl Tarkhan, covered with a white shroud was on the aivan<sup>123</sup>; women's cries were heard from the upper floor of the house: the wives of Fazyl Tarkhan carried out a sad ritual, they were mourning the killed one and some of them - the riches of the killed, which were taken away by strangers; the other were crying with fear of what would happen to them then...

Takhir peered through the open doors into the rooms below. There was no one anywhere. Here and there were women's jewellery and clothing lying around. How many wives had this Tarkhan had? If Robia was brought to him, he evidently married her then? Or was she just a servant?

Takhir jumped off the aivan, went into the middle of the yard and looking at the upper level, where weeping was heard from, shouted:

- "Hey, is Robia there? Robia-a! Is there Robia from Kuva?"

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<sup>122</sup> Chakmon - a traditional Oriental men's outer garment, woolen oriental robe

<sup>123</sup> Aivan is an asian portal, roofed terrace or salon separated from the yard with an arch

Weeping suddenly stopped. A woman in a green headscarf ran to the railing of the upper aivan. It seemed to Takhir that her eyes and eyebrows were painfully familiar...

– “Robia! Robia!”

Having seen Takhir, the woman in the green headscarf broke off the railing, but then again arose before his eyes. By that time Takhir saw her velvet vest and a string of pearls around her neck. Robia, she is really Robia! But the woman shrank back again: a nuker of bulky height, moustached, bearded, with a scar on his face feared, but his voice... the voice belonged to him, Takhir. And the voice called and urged her:

– “Robia! Robia! I am Takhir!”

A woman screamed from the top:

– “Takhir-aka!”

And she finally rushed to the stairs. He saw her quickly running down the stairs, heard the thin little jingling of jewellery chains on her plaits. Her face and eyes were like former Robia's, but dressed up differently, she seemed a little strange.

Having run downstairs Robia stopped. Unable to take her eyes off Takhir, who was still like a statue, she whispered timidly:

– “You are a ghost, Takhir-aka, aren't you?”

Robia had been considering Takhir to be speared and dead for a long time and asked God to have mercy on his soul in her prayers.

There were moments, when she addressed to God in her prayers: «I will not see him alive anymore, so please send me down to see him in a dream, as a phantom!» Maybe God heeded her supplication?

– “I'm alive, Robia! I have been looking for you for six years!”

– “Are you alive?” – Robia came to Takhir. She fingered the wool of his chakmon, sword and touched his hands. And only when Takhir hugged her by shoulders and pressed her to him, Robia believed that he was not a phantom... – “He's alive! Alive! My God, he is alive!”

Takhir stroked her shoulders in atlas speaking inelegant but so understandable to her heart:

– “Robia, my life! And you are alive, you, too! I have been looking for you for six years! Where have you been? Six years... Without you...”

Robia suddenly remembered what she had become. Oh, God! She used to be the seventh “wife” of a wealthy merchant. She got abruptly out of Takhir's hands:

– “Do not hug me, Takhir-aka! I am unworthy for you!”

Fazyl Tarkhan bought her from the very soldiers, thieves – he threw them a purse of gold. Robia abhorred this old man. He married her somewhere far away, in a city called Yassi in Turkestan, and ten days later forgot about her and went on a business trip to Bukhara. He came back with a beautiful young wife. This woman from Bukhara was his wife and the rest of the women... only lived in the harem like widows. All of them: old women and she, a young one, too. Sometimes but very rarely he came to her at night as if she were his slave, his concubine. She resisted and the old man left... how she could wipe off all that shame when she was once betrothed to Takhir, and then married... and unmarried at the same time so nobody could understand...

Robia cried bitterly covering her face with her hands. A string of pearls around her neck, a beautiful silver jewellery on her braids, an atlas dress – these all were bought by the merchant, there was no denying the truth: she didn’t wear tatters.

– “Robia, tell me the truth, did you love your husband? That’s why you are crying?”

– “I was sold to him! Against my will, against! I hate... I did hate him and do now!”

– “So why are you crying then?”

– “It pains me that I could not stay pure for you. But I have not forgotten... you, Takhirjan<sup>124</sup>! God is our witness... And that merchant... wanted to use me as a slave.”

Finally Takhir uttered what ached in his heart:

– “Have you got... a child of his?”

Keeping on crying, Robia shook her head:

– “I just... was considered to be his wife... But I was only a widow ... and a slave...”

Pain and pity to her overwhelmed the whole being of Takhir. Of course, it occurred to him before that, apparently, not a single rapist abused defenceless Robia. But when he was searching for her he just thought: «If only to find her alive!» And she was in front of him - alive. She was not a girl-flower like in former days - she was a plaything of destiny, a poor woman with no children, no family, a toy, broken by someone’s ill will, a harem widow in expensive atlas... This serious injury, even if cured, leaves scars for life. Takhir thought that it would

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<sup>124</sup> “jan” means dear

be difficult to help her to overcome all what she experienced in her soul, and it would also be hard for him to forget his search and what he has heard this day.

And yet their meeting was not only tears but also a joy!

– “Robia, stop crying! Let us be thankful for survival. For meeting finally! Well, let's go!”

– “Where?”

– “Are you not my bride?”

– “But I... I ... I'll take my things!”

– “Do not take anything from here. Forget about them. And all that was here. Do not remind me the second time!”

When Robia saw the nukers who were still hauling the household goods of the killed merchant, she said shyly:

– “I'm ashamed to go... without a covering... in the street...”

Takhir took off his chakmon. Robia slipped it over her head. The silvery chakmon covered her almost to the toes. Takhir gave a seat to Robia on his horse...

And they had a wedding soon - the war time hurried them.

## IN SAMARQAND AGAIN

### I

Roofs, wattle and daubs, fences and walls, which separate an inside yard of houses from streets, - duvals, trees and cupolas of Samarqand were under the soft white fluffy cover.

Babur was standing on the upper tier of the Bustan-saray palace and watching the city.

Interlacement of dark tree branches against the white snow reminded him of patterns of nastalik<sup>125</sup> written on white paper. It was like the letter of Alisher Navoi received that day from Herat. And he felt pride and joy blooming again.

After Babur smartly took Samarqand from Shaybani, the poets managed to glorify his daring courage by writing refined poetry-tarikh – a kind of historical poetry - on this event, in which the numerical values of letters of the first eight words in total amounted to the exact date of his victory. But congratulations from Navoi flattered Babur much more, even though it was written in prose. How far Herat was from Samarqand and how many famous people and important cases claimed the attention of Navoi! And it turned out that

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<sup>125</sup> Nastalik is one of the main script styles used in writing the Perso-Arabic script

the great poet knew him, Babur, and watched him intently even from such a distance. "This time you won Samarqand over with courage worthy of your name" - wrote Navoi, making clear that he knew about the first capture of the city, and hinting that Babur's name, which meant "lion" not without reason. Or maybe there was one more hint in the words of Navoi: Mir Alisher was known by his philanthropy and he could hardly approve the first capture of Samarqand by Babur, it was achieved by an excruciating seven-month siege that brought the people of Samarqand so much suffering. That really wasn't a kind of "lion's" jump, oh it was not!

Babur went into the hall, where the books were kept in cabinets with shutters fretted by skilled carvers. Next to the cabinet there was a low table on six legs, made from fragrant smelling sandalwood, and on the table there was a scroll tied with a golden ribbon - it was the letter from Navoi. Babur sat down on the brocade quilted mattress and began rereading the letter. And at that time he took some phrases, which didn't attach much importance at first, in a special way. In that lines Navoi, having learnt from an Andijan architect about the poetic gift of Babur, gave a subtle hint encouraging him to try his hand at versification and not only at battlefield. This architect could probably be mavlona<sup>126</sup> Fazliddin, guessed Babur. Apparently, he arrived in Herat, became well with Navoi and told him about the verse amusements of Babur, and about many other things... At that time Babur wanted to add a poem to his finished letter of response to Herat. He had to choose the best one, of course. But which one?

He had been leafing through his thick notebook where he had put down his poetic experiments for a long time.

Maybe a ghazal<sup>127</sup>, which he once started, would do – it was about sorrows of loneliness which came to his soul because of the fact that at that time betrayal was followed by betrayal? His soul was abandoned and lost in the world at that time. Babur had heard that the great Mir Alisher not once had to feel what meant the betrayal of close people, even his closest friend Sultan Husayn Bayqarah failed to become for the poet a person to rely on, he did not quench his thirst for big and good deeds for people. Oh, Babur wished to be able to express the deepest feelings of Navoi's soul with his verse!

*Any lover except my life I did not find*

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<sup>126</sup> Mavlona is a honorable title for scientists and clergy, from Arab. "our lord"

<sup>127</sup> Ghazal is a form of Eastern poetry (like qasida and rubai)

*Any wife except my soul I did not find*

But this ghazal is unfinished. Maybe it must be finished? But not only that Babur's mood was far from a kind of one caused by loneliness (let Shaybani prepare to win the city back, let him come and stick to Samarqand again - the joy of victory and general acceptance was still alive in Babur's heart), a poet was distracted from poetry by a servant.

- "Lord, forgive your slave, but..."
- "What?" - Babur frowned with displeasure.
- "Your mother, the noble khanum, is waiting to meet you."
- "Is she?" - Babur jumped from his seat. -"Have they arrived?"
- "They have. And the begin, too."
- "It's amazing and wonderful!" - Babur said and put his pen and paper aside.

II

They had not seen each other for about six months. Kutlugh Nigar Khanum with Aysha begin and Khanzoda waited in Uratube until trusted men were sent by Babur. They took them to Samarqand.

Babur met the women in the large hall on the first tier. The mother hugged Babur, and he felt the thinness of her body and almost weightlessness of her hands. The sister - probably because she came from the cold - had cheeks flushing with crimson and her eyes were shining fervently, the long trip seemed not to exhaust her; she looked happier and more beautiful than ever. Babur was very pleased when Khanzoda's hand touched his right shoulder - it was an accepted greeting of female relative to a male one.

Aysha begin, without taking off her warm wool shawl, was standing silently a little distance away.

- "Why are you so late? We have been waiting for you for several weeks!"

- "Oh, my amirzoda<sup>128</sup>, we have a very excusable reason, we could not hurry", - Khanzoda riddled with a smile and meaningfully glanced at Aysha.

Telling the truth, the wife was not the person Babur missed most of all, although he wrote her some time that he wanted to fall down to her knees. Romantic dreams of his youth vanished. And yet he neither could nor wanted to seem inattentive towards Aysha. He

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<sup>128</sup> Amirzoda is a title, meaning "a son of the Emir, his heir"

went closer to his seventeen-year-old wife, thin as a reed, placed his right shoulder under her palm and said:

– “Welcome, begin!”

Aysha raised to her husband’s shoulder a thin arm, bent at the sharp, ugly, bony elbow:

– “My shah, I congratulate you with the victory!”

Look how she exalted him, addressing him as “my shah”.

– “And I congratulate you with returning to your hometown, begin.”

– “Thanks...” – Aysha begin looked down.

– “Oh, what a hard time Aysha begin had on the way, poor thing.” – Khanzoda said. – “It is hard for her to travel now, much harder than usual.”

That’s how it was! His wife had became thin and somehow put on weight at the same time. Her belly was too big under her dress. Yellowish spots appeared on her emaciated face. It meant that Babur would become a father? The fetus was about six months.

His wife couldn’t stand any ride on horseback or in a covered carriage, too: she was dizzy. Babur imagined the hardships of the undertaken trip, especially for her being pregnant. Poor Aysha, indeed!

– “Now you got rid of all the hardships”, - he said. – “Comfortable rooms are prepared for you. Order what you need, all of us in Bustan-saray are at your service!”

Khanzoda begin smiled openly and happily:

– “We are thankful... thank you... We saw each other and our joy ascended to heaven.”

– “Your faithful brother also missed talks with you, begin... And when you all are settling, I will order to lay a dastarkhan<sup>129</sup>... there, in heaven, at the top”, – Babur pointed his finger at the ceiling and burst out laughing like a child. And everyone followed his laugh. Even Aysha did.

God, what a joy was that day! Listening to himself, to his loud and free heartbeat, Babur thought it was his paternal feeling playing in him, like a pipe; new, fine and pleasant. And Aysha begin with her yellow-brown spots on her face seemed to Babur his dear and darling.

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<sup>129</sup> Dastarkhan is a traditional Asian space, where food is eaten

At night, when they switched off the lamp and went to bed, Aysha wrapped in a duvet, stretched and looked up for a long time, lying immovable and as it seemed, very tired. Suddenly she said:

– “I am proud of you, my lord.”

Babur was startled by the unexpected coincidence of what his wife was thinking about with what he was remembering. Once he told her: “We will meet in Samarqand” - and kept his word. His wife was proud of him.

And she wanted to say that it was a pleasure and pride for her to become the mother of his child soon. Babur understood it and asked:

– “What time... when we will rejoice, begin?”

– “There are less than three months left... The closer it is the more I’m afraid.”

– “Oh, come on, what fears... You have just been telling that you are “Proud”.”

– “Yes, I have... If God gives us a son let’s call him Fakhriddin<sup>130</sup>, OK?”

The father’s name is Zahiriddin Mukhammad Babur, and clever Aysha begin had suggested the name keeping tune to the father’s.

– “Fakhriddin is a good name. Truly it is. And if it is a daughter, then she’ll be Fakhriniso, OK, begin?”

Aysha begin wanted to give birth to a son, to become a mother of heir of throne. She replied to Babur in the way:

– “Agree... but I’m asking God for a son.”

– “Let it be!”

Fakhriddin ... Fakhriniso ... Beautiful names. Let God grant the one who will have one of these names with a happy lot.

### III

Mischance never comes single, and joy does not, as well.

Good luck followed one after another. After Samarqand was won back, Urgut in the east, Sogdiana and Dabusia in the west went out of Shaybani khan’s hand, and accepted the authority of Babur. Shaybani was still preparing for future battles and raised the siege of Samarqand. He retreated with his main army and disturbed only with small groups forays.

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<sup>130</sup> Fakhriddin is a men’s name, from “fakhr” that means pride. Fakhriniso is a women’s name with the same meaning

That day Babur received good news from Karshi and Guzar – Babur's soldiers sent the rulers, set by Shaybani khan in these cities, away and the new authorities sent gifts to Babur, and there were sent hundreds of soldiers at his disposal. Beks, who brought these new nukers with them, Babur, in turn, generously presented with clothes, money and rich housing...

Babur did not have time to continue the previous day's letter to Mir Alisher this day, too: on the wide marble staircase leading into the library hall, he was intercepted by his sister.

– "My amirzoda, is it true that you have received a message from Herat?"

Babur stopped:

– "Yes, it's true; it is from the great Mir Alisher."

Khanzoda begin expressed her pleasure on this occasion, but she seemed to be expecting some important news from her younger brother, she was unhappy and her look demanded something from her brother. Babur did not know what it was yet, but he felt that his sister had heartache. He hesitated for a moment but then suggested resolutely:

– "Come up with me... I'll show you a letter from Herat."

When Khanzoda begin, reading the letter of Alisher Navoi, came to the place where the name of the architect from Andijan was mentioned, her eyes suddenly became wet.

– "Why did you have tears on your eyes, begin? I wanted to please my little sister so much..."

– "These are the tears of... joy... I'm happy that the glory of my brother spreads ever wider."

– "I want to feel joy for my dear sister, too!"

– "You can't help it; your sister is unlucky..."

– "But the brother of this sister is - all-powerful and successful",

– Babur turned the conversation to a humorous way again and again,

– "Surely he can not help, can he?"

– "You already have endured a great deal because of me, amirzoda. If that year... if in Osh I had agreed to marry Tanbal, he probably would not have become your worst enemy."

With this sincere confession Khanzoda begin completely disarmed Babur and he felt a wave of even greater love for his sister. He wanted to be generous and give her happiness: in fact, he was replete with high emotions and thoughts and that's why well situated

to make his sister happy - indeed, she was the closest human to him as no one else.

Now all of his beloved women: his sister, mother and pregnant wife, moved to the magnificent palace of Samarcand. How many sovereigns and their sovereign descendants lived here! And just few of them left a grateful trace in human memory after them. And all the miracles of the talented architects were still glaring, rejoicing eyes and hearts. So, it turns out that a good architect is more in need than hundreds of idle, shallow sovereigns!

- "Begin! Tanbal became my enemy, not only because of you... Let your conscience be calm, my dear sister. A snake will remain a snake and it sticks to its viperine temper though fail or foul."

- "Thank you... Baburjan", - said Khanzoda with the voice that became alike their mother's.

- "Great Mir Alisher expects worthy deeds from us and sent us a message", - Babur returned to a solemn half-joking tone, - "well, and we'll erect palaces, which will not darken for ages... so that Khorasan not to get ahead of Maverannahr", - he added, smiling, - "I would like to invite here the best architects, begin. I will send the reply to Mir Alisher with a clever envoy... If that architect, mentioned by Mir Alisher, is our mavlona Fazliddin from Andijan, the envoy will invite him to Samarcand."

Khanzoda begin's eyes, not having dried yet sparkled with joy. Then suddenly she looked down, and whispered shyly:

- "You're the only star of my hope... in the sky of Maverannahr, my brother."

- "Oh sister, now ask the Almighty to remove this mad Shaybani khan from our way soon. Let peace come soon and be strong and long-lasting! Then we all take breath and set to unfinished ghazals and cherished madrasahs and palaces. Do you remember how we started it in Osh?"

Rather! Khanzoda begin kept drawings of the mavlona, once received from Takhir. It was uncomfortable to confess this to her brother. She said only:

- "My amirzoda, God helps us realize our dreams! All of them! I will pray for it days and nights!"

Babur intended to spend a long time at his notebook with drafts, making notes of his ideas, started and unfinished poems, after this

conversation with his sister. One of the couplets seemed to be proper, expressing his present-day state of mind:

*In return of devotion a person will finally get it  
And those who brings only sorrows will finally get it*

Won't this poem do to send Alisher Navoi?

He wrote one more line:

*Let kind man be happy and lucky with faithful surrounding*

No, it was too plainly and directly stated (he struck out the writing). He was deep in thought. He wanted to express the idea that these rare in such sinful world people like Navoi, the people who did a lot of good to others, did not deserve to be rewarded after death, in human memory, but here on earth, during their lifetime, they should be happy more than any other, and kindness and devotion of others had to give them that happiness. The poems somehow did not reflect this thought. "Isn't it so in life?" – Babur asked himself and struck out the line again.

He wrote above it:

*Let treachery, deceit and evil pass a kind man.*

His pen stopped again. No, that won't do!

Babur closed his notebook and stood up from his desk.

He walked to and fro in the hall for a long time.

His joyful mood and high spirit somehow vanished.

He was even glad when, distracted from gloomy thoughts, he was informed that Kasymbek came together with Mullah Binai from Shakhrisabz, and the poet, Kamaliddin Binai, and requested an appointment with both of them.

– "What shall we wait for? Let's talk now", - decided Babur and coming down to the reception room began to recall the details of his meeting with Binai earlier.

## IV

Babur had met the famous poet of Herat Kamaliddin Binai three years ago, when he captured Samarqand for the first time. Binai had a copy of a rare book, rewritten by the best calligraphers. Having heard that Babur was a passionate bibliophile, Binai decided to present him with this manuscript-treasure. Babur knew that Binai had neither house nor place in Samarqand and lived in poverty and that is why he decided to buy the book. He called booksellers and asked how much

its price could be. The answer was: "The highest price is five thousand dirhams<sup>131</sup>"

Alas, Babur did not have time to send the money to Binai, because, as we know, he fell ill and nearly broke with this transitory life.

When he recovered and prepared to go to Andijan, he saw that very book with himself (its title was "Majmuati Rashidi" – a historical book, "Collection of Rashid") and remembered that he had not paid for it to Binai. Immediately Babur called his treasurer, who counted out five thousand gold dirhams, and a trusted man carried them to the poet. But the money couldn't find the owner of the book at once. The trusted person couldn't find Binai: the homeless poet got lost somewhere. But meanwhile Babur had to go to Andijan to rescue his mother and teacher. It seemed there was no time to look for Binai, but Babur insisted:

– "I'll not leave Samarqand until I square this account!"

After this, the messengers and nukers rode to all parts of the city, found Binai, told him what had happened and why it was impossible to refuse the money (the campaign could be spoiled!), and finally handed this ill-fated five thousand dirhams to him.

Binai saw many sovereigns, greedy to someone else's goods. The honesty of sixteen-year-old Babur Mirza touched the poet, and he wrote a poem on this occasion. He managed to present as a remembrance one scroll with this poem, rewritten by a skillful calligrapher to Babur before his departure from Samarqand.

The poem consisted of forty-four lines. Binai wrote with the usual for poetry hyperboles:

*You have become the glory of the world in deeds,  
Zahiriddin Babur, impartial and fair Shah, indeed!*

Babur laughed good-naturedly: just think about these words: "You have become the glory of the world"! But then, maybe the whole world, even for a moment, appeared before the eyes of a homeless poet, as the embodiment of justice due to a small kindness, done in time!..

But then Samarqand was captured by Shaybani khan.

Khan arranged mushoira, a poetical contest, and invited Binai, too. At this competition of poets Binai recited a poem Shaybani liked. He made him a court poet - a rich one! He ordered him, as usual, to

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<sup>131</sup> Dirham is an ancient Iran and Arabian coin

write the history of his victories. Mullah Binai began writing Shaybaniname<sup>132</sup>, but at that time Samarqand again came into Babur's hands. In those very days, when Shaybani khan gradually removed all troops from all regions around Samarqand and retreated to Bukhara to gain strength for a new struggle, Mullah Binai escaped the khan's camp and arrived in Samarqand. He sought after a meeting with Babur, but Kasymbek, considering the poet a supporter of Shaibani-khan, did not let him and sent him to Shakhrisabz. By the way, Babur didn't know about it for some time and recently even rebuked Kasymbek:

– “You should not have done so. Mullah Binai is a great poet. He came on his own, so you had to allow him to meet me.”

Honest Kasymbek explained:

– “Your great poet, my lord, wrote praising poems about the invader, Shaybani khan.”

Babur smiled:

– “Don’t you know he turned out to dedicate me and eulogistic poem too?”

What should a poet do if the rulers are so fond of praise?

Kasymbek remained serious:

– “My lord, this person may be a secret spy of Shaybani khan.”

Babur after thinking a while said:

– “No. He didn’t become a spy of Husayn Bayqarah. And he served Shaybani with his poems...but for a short time.”

– “But Binai lived in Yahya Khoja’s house, he ate his bread, and then he began to serve openly to Shaybani khan. If he even was not a spy, is it good to behave this way?”

– “I agree it’s not good. But we just must show him what is considered good. Send a man, dear bek, let Mullah Binai be brought safe and sound to Samarqand.”

And this was already an order and Kasymbek has fulfilled it today.

Babur went downstairs, and through a special entrance came into the waiting-room. Soon Kasymbek and Mullah Binai entered through the opposite common door.

Three years ago, Mullah Binai looked strong and presentable. Now he had lost much weight and seemed to have shrunk. The

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<sup>132</sup> A history of victories of Shaybani khan

chapon, his unbuttoned outwear, and the turban<sup>133</sup> he was wearing worn-out. But his big eyes as before radiated his nature of composure and pride.

Babur met the poet in the middle of the room and invited him to come along. Having set Kasymbek to his right and Binai to his left he turned to the poet and asked about his health. Binai answered with a couplet in Tajik:

*I won't get from my fields any eatable thing.*

*Nothing cosy or new I can wear, I think.*

Babur felt the sounds playing in these lines, especially in the first syllables, smiled, having got the poet's clear hint to his miserable fate because of his jobs for the khan. Babur becked, and showing agreement touched his forehead with his fingers and tailed away in silence. Oh, the lord wished to answer the poem with the poem, Kasymbek beckoned to Binai: "Wait a while!" Soon Babur put aside his hand and together with this wide movement to the side he pronounced:

*We'll exert our power for you right away:*

*Let you have food and clothes you needed to stay.*

Mullah Binai didn't expect such fast answer and he asked again in Tajik with "the prose" (Babur's poems were in Turkic):

Repeat once more, my lord, I'd like to grasp better the size of the poem.

Babur changed his *beit*<sup>134</sup> slightly:

*I will exert my power with ordering my men*

*To feed you to your fill and dress you better then.*

"I am rapt by your talent, my lord!" – said Mullah Binai, then kept silence for a while, twitching the end of his greyish beard and seeking the answer. At last he found what he wanted – lifted his eyes high, drew himself up and this time spoke out in Turkic:

*This gift is great and undeserved as if came out of the blue*

*Though I have never strived for the wealth and riches, it is true.*

Babur was also surprised; he didn't think that Binai was the expert not only in Persian, but in Turkic poems as well. But Binai estimated himself modestly, not deserving "the great gift", but it was

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<sup>133</sup> Turban is a man's headdress made by swathing a length of linen around the head or around a caplike base

<sup>134</sup> *Beit* is a distich in the Eastern poetry expressing a finished thought; it can be a separate couplet or make other forms of Eastern poetry (qasida, ruba'i, ghazal)

evidently a usual poetical trick. Oh rhymes, rhymes, how can you hide the truth with the beautiful word and strip it at the same time!

Babur called the clerk and ordered him to write down on the paper the Turkic beits of Binai.

The mushoira<sup>135</sup> between Babur and Binai made an impression on Kasymbek too. The same day he gave a decent house with a yard to the poet and according to Babur's order sent him flour, rice, a sheep and a warm fur coat. Mullah Binai like other significant officers was prescribed monthly a considerable salary.

More than once or twice after this meeting Babur talked to the poet from Herat at his place upstairs, in the "refuge of solitude" and every time at the dastarkhan. At first Binai thought that he would tell about his life at Shaybani khan's and prepared for this story, which would be partially ironic and partially rebuking his own weakness. But Babur asked about quite other things – about Herat, Navoi, about unclear misunderstanding, which had taken place between the two poets, who were friends earlier.

– "Once Alisherbek had an earache", - told Binai. "For warming the ears he winded his head with a green headscarf. The silk seller having heard about this began to sell his green headscarves with the inscription "Like Alisher's". I venerate Navoi, he is a great person, a great poet, but the fervour of selfish men to make profit on Navoi's name, to earn money, to name different trifles "Like Alisher's" – all this cut to the heart your humble servant. I ordered for my donkey a saddle of intentionally absurd form and named it "Like Alisher's" too. And this saddle also became fashionable! And the slanderers set rumour afloat that "Binai makes fun of Navoi", and this became the reason for the misunderstandings between us, which was very sorrowful for me. I respect Navoi infinitely! I felt longing towards him!"

Through the conversations it turned out that Binai dedicated to Mir Alisher a qasida<sup>136</sup> and when he recited it for Babur by heart he couldn't keep from admiring.

The greatest wish of Binai was for Mir Alisher to know this qasida, and Babur affably suggested sending it with his messenger who was ready to leave for Herat.

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<sup>135</sup> A poetical contest

<sup>136</sup> A poem, an ode

The conversations with Binai again and again returned Babur to his own poetic message to Navoi. But comparing his lines with Navoi's rhymes, which he used to call "incomparable in all kinds of knowledge" Babur found that he hadn't reached the level which would allow him a spiritual meeting with a great person of Herat; he rejected one rhyme after another, one version after another. Babur felt that what seemed to him simple and clear became complicated and even was interpreted as perverse by the people's tongues. The rhymes he used to compose didn't express the complexity of the world and didn't describe much in it. For example the state of a person who is highly lifted by fate and who is noble in his thoughts but pressed by his neighbourhood, the palace crowd, selfish and fussy, sometimes adulatory, sometimes artful and false, because he had to live among them. And did his poems tell about the evil the rulers-timeservers-brought? They achieved the helm of power and see only themselves, think only about themselves, even making closer to themselves poets and architects they were thinking only about themselves, about glory of their names. Alisher Navoi and mulla Binai - his stories became sadder and sadder - had solid reasons to be dissatisfied with the palace crowd and the rulers of this world - the rulers for some time.

*Anything good from timeservers who know my soul?*

The line like a groan of his soul very fluently expressed the thought. The excitement of penetrating understanding all embraced Babur. Now he saw with the eyes of fast thought Alisher Navoi who was in Herat, and he had something to tell to the great poet. The one who waited for good things from people even the most highly lifted, but thinking only of their own profit, that person would be deceived, certainly deceived.

Mir Alisher brought good things to people, because he stood much higher than the flatterers surrounding the sovereigns (all of them were temporary in this transitory life) and Navoi himself. Babur wanted to express what he wished - the purpose of life must be high, only then your life could be reasonable!

*Anything good from a timeserver who knows my soul?*

*And a shakh more honest than his courtiers, them all?*

*Serve the good, not yourself, being above such a crowd,*

*If you do, you'll become a Human and achieve your goal!*

...In that way one night he ended the poem and the letter to Navoi. In two days a special messenger left Samarqand for Herat with

the letter and expensive gifts. Babur hoped he would get the answer from Navoi till the end of the winter. But when the first snowdrops appeared the sad news came from Herat instead of the expected answer: Alisher Navoi died in this severe winter time. The messenger was still on his way there when the poet had left in this world. So many years Babur lived with a hope that Navoi would be his mentor! The fate deprived him of this hope.

And the new war with Shaybani appeared on the threshold.

## V

A hoof crushed the tulip bud which was going to lift its head from the ground and open.

Shaybani Khan hopped to the hilltop and froze in the saddle watching his horsed masses swiveled down in the valley.

It was worthy admiring, though only some time ago ...

The Dabusia, a famous fortress between Samarqand and Bukhara, under the light blue spring sky, seemed to the khan to be a majestic mount created by hands. And in the end of last autumn when the fortress was captured by Babur, Shaybani Khan was far from beautiful vivid comparisons. He found himself in a difficult position – only Bukhara was left in his hands and surely the heath, too. It was endless, but not infinite with people, new soldiers. Some sultans had already said: "It's not late yet; let's return to the Turkestan heath!" But Shaybani didn't yield: he believed in his star and in his heath. And he also knew: secret persons from Samarqand informed him: Babur, absorbed in conversations with poets and scientists, was not preparing too hard for new battles. Besides, with the spring time there appeared a plague and famine was close in the city which so many times during the latest years passed from one hand to another, the city which was demolished and eviscerated.

Shaybani insistently gathered and trained the troops. And when he suddenly marched off from Bukhara to Dabusia, his soldiers were ready to assail the fortress. They climbed the walls, being strewed with arrows and stones, bathed with burning oil, but climbed in spite of the losses. And when the rush a little bit weakened and the nukers wavered, the khan threw new detachments of selected nukers led by his brother Makhmud and his son Timur. The soldiers saw that the khan didn't have compassion towards his brother and son and renewed the storm with more fury. Dead fell down like mulberry,

leaving free attack stairs for the living, so a hand-to-hand battle began on the fortress walls, a pitiless battle, when the killed helped the attackers – their bodies filled the embrasures between the merlons and it was more and more difficult for the defenders to shoot down.

The army of Shaybani Khan was much more numerous and strong than the fortress's garrison. Dabusia was taken; all the defenders who remained alive were killed according to the khan's order.

A messenger sent from Dabusia to Babur for help came in great hurry but when Shaybani Khan was already celebrating his victory. It was the first victory after the long track of autumn and winter defeats, such victory always encourages. Now Shaybani Khan made Dabusia his support and there was preparation for a leap to Samarqand...

The horse races below were not for the khan's amusement.

It was hard military exercises. Soon Shaybani Khan would need the fastest and the most enduring soldiers and horses in the decisive battle with Babur.

The previous day a spy in the clothes of a dervish – as Oriental santons are called - came from Samarqand and said that Babur's wife had given birth to a daughter. The girl was named Fakhriniso.

Shaybani Khan watching his horsemen like golden eagles enthusiastically and censoriously thought: "Babur has become proud. Well, let him feast his eyes upon the autumn victory, let him compose poems, let Fakhriniso be Fakhriniso! But this time my golden eagles learn to fly and claw the enemy. Anyone will give up the ghost in their claws!"

No battle was ever prepared by Shaybani khan so obsessively. It was not so easy to overcome Babur. He was a young upstart. He was successful, sporty, and bold. He did his business cleverly – most cities and villages of Maverranahr were disposed to support him. The beks...well, the beks were usual beks. They were corrupt and afraid of those who were stronger that moment. Last year most beks of Sultan Ali joined him, Shaybani Khan, and after Babur took Samarqand (well, it was smartly, right enough), ran to Babur, whose army was also growing every day. Even Ahmad Tanbal sent his younger brother Sultan Khalil with two hundred nukers to Babur's disposal: he was afraid of him to whom he swore in "eternal" fidelity. If it went on this way Babur would be invincible. Well the spring was not the summer.

And the past autumn wouldn't repeat. It was necessary to advance the strengthening of Babur, to be faster than him.

And Shaybani Khan, having left in Bukhara and Dabusia the garrisons and the faithful managers, moved quickly to Samarcand. He did, without hiding. Besides, he had sent a letter to Babur in which playing on the knight strings of the young commander, called him to fight "honestly" in the open field. "The brave", - khan wrote, - "test themselves there in the field, every little boy can sit in the fortress".

Babur left Samarcand, went towards the Shaybani's army but stopped in one tosh<sup>137</sup> distance in Saripul, made a camp near Zaravshan River, dug the camp with a deep ditch, constructed walls of branches and beams impenetrable with the arrows.

No, he was not ready yet to begin the battle, going to wait for coming of fresh troops including those who were ready to go to the rear of Shaybani's army.

From far Turkestan there was not expected any new detachments. And Shaybani knew that reinforcement had to come to Babur. A secret report from Shakhrisabz which plunged the khan to confusion informed, for instance, that Baki Tarkhan had gathered there two thousand nukers, was gathering one more thousand and was going to march off to help Babur.

To advance the battle, at any cost to advance the battle, - Shaybani was thinking over how to achieve it days and nights.

Arrows showered without really hurting much Babur's soldiers with deafening noise of drums and war trumpets. The khan's cavalry couldn't cross the ditch and it wasn't his purpose. The nukers made terrible tumult, their offensive cries joined into complete boom:

- "Why are you hidden? Don't want to fight openly?"
- "Cowards! Cowards!"
- "And Babur is trembling, doesn't want to show himself to our khan!"

- "Hey, who is not afraid, let him show his face!"

Shaybani Khan knew that in the night darkness such a tumult influences people's consciousness a lot. Hundreds, thousands of horsemen scamper around the fortifications, the tramp of hoots, wild shouts shake the ground, burning arrows seize into the construction of branches and trunks - even little flame can seem a great fire in such mess. But dry hay in fact flared up, being provided for Babur's horse

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<sup>137</sup> "a stone" - a measure of length in Central Asia, about 13 km

guard for future use, the felt of nomad's tents, which were not far from the ditches, smoked.

Though this bold night attack was fought off, it lifted the attackers' spirit and not the defenders' one. And principally it was the signal for the astrologer: act, hurry up!

Kasymbek was persuading Babur again and again to wait for the support from Shakhrisabz. But Babur didn't want to listen to him. The position of the stars promised to him, only to him the fast victory.

- "Look at these eight stars, my lord!" - Mystically reducing his voice Shakhabiddin indoctrinated to Babur. - "It's the rarest phenomenon - all eight stars are in one row! It's the divine sign of favor! The stars promise the victory to you! Only to you! You shouldn't stickle. After two-three days some of these stars will go to another side of the firmament, to the side where your opponent is..."

That very night Babur gathered his commanders and gave the order to get ready for the immediate battle...

It was the astrologer, who helped it, Mavlona Shakhabiddin. This famous fortuneteller from Samarqand had served Shaybani earlier. After the khan knew about the trust with which Babur accepted the poet, runaway Binai, he arranged "an escape" from his camp for the astrologer. He was beaten strongly till he bled, ripped his clothes: Babur was famous for his trust and mercy, people knew it well. So it happened this way and Shaybani Khan's spy was included by Babur to the number of his close court. At starlit nights they together looked at the firmament, and then mavlona Shakhabiddin gave vent to his tongue, predicting brilliant victory to Babur.

Through the contact dervish the khan passed his order to the astrologer: to persuade Babur to enter the battle this week by all means. And in the morning he got the answer: let the powerful califs will be done but with the condition that at one of the nearest nights the attack of the khan's troops would happen - to tease the ambition of the young commander.

The nights were dark, moonless.

And once in such a night, horse frenzied avalanches rushed towards Babur's camp.

Shaybani khan didn't sleep all that noisy night, only just before sunrise he closed his eyes for a while. And when the sun rose he was on the horse again, and everybody saw his white tent overlooking the place again. Babur's camp and all the roads coming there were seen

well from there. Not long before the battle, not the troops from Shakhrisabz, but a troop of Mogols about three-four hundred came along one of the roads to Babur's camp, thanks to Allah; they were sent from Tashkent by Makhmud-khan to support his nephew. Shaybani Khan was not afraid of them, he knew that Mogols were in discordance with Samarcand people; and even these hundreds themselves taken from different places were not in accordance.

Shaybani Khan exerted all his abilities, all his experience, preparing for the battle day and night. In the day time he watched attentively every hill, every cavity on the future battle field, took into consideration the fact from what side the sun would shine, to what directions the winds blow.

And when Shaybani Khan saw Babur lining his troops, spreading out banners with the image of a crescent, he was completely ready for the battle.

Riding his favourite piebald gelding, Shaybani began to perambulate the rows of his soldiers.

– “My golden eagles!” – His voice rang like a sword-blade. “We have no other support except God. The land of our fathers is far, if the enemy overcomes us we won’t reach it. We must overcome the enemy! My great hope is on God! We are his host... Today the dream predicted me – the victory is our fate!”

– “Inshaalla<sup>138</sup>! All is in Allah’s power!” – Hundreds of whiffed voices as one.

In front of his soldiers Shaybani Khan recited by heart a small surah from the Koran as triumphantly and in confirmed manner as he could. With clear and simultaneously charming voice – the real imam’s voice – he pronounced in conclusion:

– “Allah is great! Amen!”

– “Allah Akbar<sup>139</sup>!” – Thousand of voices shouted shaking the heavens.

And the troops, flurried with the exhortation of the warrior-calif and his prophesy, consonantly and mightily moved towards the enemy. It acted as a single body, it reminded one of a bow, strained with one angle bow-string with its arch ahead.

The river was to the left. Shaybani Khan, sloping the common movement a little moved the right side of the army faster than the left

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<sup>138</sup> “Insha Allah” – May God protect you.

<sup>139</sup> “akbar” means great

one. Here the field had a slope and the wind blew to the soldiers' back. Faster, faster, the cavalry could move faster! The grasping method "tulgama"<sup>140</sup>, which Shaybani was going to use, demanded very quick actions. On the right wing the fastest flash horses and the daring horsemen were prepared beforehand.

Babur saw the left half of the enemy's "bow" incurved (the right one for Shaybani) and to face the enemy he unfolded his right wing, moving it ahead – and so his army stood with the back side to the river.

The khan's troops were moving closer. Their leader with the selected nukers-bodyguards and the standard-bearer remained on the hill. And Babur stood on the hill like that in the distance of three miles. Behind him in the rays of the morning sun Zaravshan sparkled.

Shaybani Khan had more cavalry. In Babur's army there were more infantry, armed with the high shields, long spears and battle-axes with long poles. To break through the wall made of such shields, spears and battle-axes was not easy for a skipping cavalry. But horsemen have the speed advantage. Tulgama – means to embrace from wings, to strike with the hot breathing deadly wedge, sharp arrow, discharged from the bow-string of the straightening bow to the less than the center defended places in the enemy's formation.

When the distance till Babur's infantry was about a verst left, Sultan Makhmud, Janibek Sultan and Timur Sultan, fulfilling the khan's order, suddenly turned their horsemen to the right, more to the right, bypassing the center and the left wings of Babur's army. The experienced Khamza Sultan and Makhdi Sultan – the left half of Shaybani's bow – did the same from their side: they didn't touch the center, rounded with their cavalry the left flank of the enemy and rushed to the rear.

Babur put the strongest part of his troops to the center, but now he had to transfer their parts to the left and right flanks feverishly quickly. In tulgama there is a weak moment as well: the halves of the "bow" could be divided from each other too far, in the center the "bow" could break, the impetuous rush ahead, to break the center, and there is no more "bow", only two separate halves. Ahead! Babur's soldiers struck the weakened center of Shaybani. Now everything depended on the speed of actions.

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<sup>140</sup> One of the methods of actions, used during attacks at the war

The khan was ahead! Babur's cavalry was not able to cut the enemy's ways either to the right or to the left. Sultan Makhmud managed to jump to Babur's rear. Khamza Sultan's horsemen bypassed his flanks and joined Sultan Makhmud's horsemen. Babur's army mingled from the unexpected strikes from the back. The infantry put in the center was pressed from the back with their own cavalry, who were squeezed by the enemy's impetuous cavalry.

Babur concentrated the best hundreds from his own cavalry. Like a tongue of flame it broke forth out of the chaos of the battle and having pierced the weak center of the heath men, darted directly to the hill where Shaybani khan stood. The onslaught of these hundreds was steamroller. The detachment of Kupakbiy's nukers rushed ahead but stuck in the slashing – while Kupakbiy would come, Babur's "fist" could batter Shaybani Khan's encirclement. The alarm flapped on his hill.

Abdulrahim Mullah, though being in a fever, holding his rather quiet mare, implored:

– "Oh, lord, our holy imam, we must retract to a safe place! When it is not too late..."

Shaybani's face turned pale like a dead man's one. He himself wanted to move to a safe place, but his flags are on this hill. If he came down the hill, the army wouldn't see either the calif or his banner. Panic, the harbinger of defeat, will begin.

Shaybani yelled:

– "We will die but not retract!"

He ordered his selected nukers (the hundred of personal guards of the calif) cruelly:

– "Come out everybody! Hinder those ones! Die, but hinder!"

And the last support of the khan, the hundred, which in the case of defeat was to obstruct, to save him at any cost, rushed to the mortal counterattack. Very few of them remained alive, but the attack of Babur's fist was weakened, stopped, and meanwhile Kupakbiy came, his four hundred horsemen surrounded Babur's soldiers. But some tens of the most daring of Babur's guys could break the ring of Kupakbiy and flung the previous direction – towards the hill, where Shaybani was. A part of khan's retinue rushed backward, on the slope. The khan himself stood on his place and let an arrow from the bow, and though the arrow touched nobody, Kupakbiy's nukers shouted a

scream of delight, caught up Babur's horsemen and killed them all none remaining.

And there in the chaos of the main slashing, tulgama was bringing its fruits. The infantry already couldn't fulfil Babur's orders. Mogols<sup>141</sup>, who recently had come from Tashkent, seeing that Babur was loosing the battle, ran away, taking the horses left without their riders as the booty. Some mogul horsemen in the battle fuss overthrew the Andijan and Samarcand nukers fighting with them in the same row in order to capture their horses.

The front troops of Sultan Makhmud were moving closer to the hill where Babur stood.

At last Babur, surrounded by the guards, came down from the hill to the river. Shaybani saw this retreat, but he didn't give the order to break through to Babur – he was afraid of the trap. But it was not the trap. Babur let the horse to the river stream. Some hundreds of his soldiers stood like a wall on the bank, blocking the way of the attackers.

Shaybani Khan spread his hands toward the sky:

– “Thank you, God, thank you!”

And flipped the numbness, that embraced him at the look of Babur retreating to the river, urged the messenger:

– “Gallop, say to my golden eagles: the one who brings Babur's head will get the same amount of gold how much his head weights!”

The messenger touched the horse but Shaybani Khan stopped him:

– “No, say to my golden eagles...Let them bring Babur. The one, who does this, will get the mount of gold as his stature! Gallop! I want to see him near my feet – alive or dead.”

Shaybani Khan again spread his hands toward the sky. He petrified in this pose. Felt the moisture on the eyelashes – the tears of victory. Slightly smiling he lowered his hands and quickly wiped the tears with the palm.

## VI

The saratan<sup>142</sup> month has passed – the hottest of the summer months, and the asad<sup>143</sup> month began.

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<sup>141</sup> Mogols are people of Mongol origin, they lived at the territory of Afganistan

<sup>142</sup> Saratan (means “Crayfish”) month is from June 21 up to July 20, it's the forth month of the Muslim's solar year

Behind the city walls the branches of orchard trees are heavy with fruit, bowing to the earth-provider. In the city itself the gardens and the vineyards became empty long ago: among the leaves, which haven't become yellow yet one can see neither a ripe apple nor a juicy sweet peach, or a bunch of ripe grapes. The inhabitants of Samarcand have been for five months tormented with starvation: the siege had become stronger, more severe, and more pitiless. All city gates are closed; Shaybani khan's troops are very close to the city. Nobody can either leave the city or enter it.

On the plain court – the flat roof of the Ulugbek madrasah – the Babur's white tent is put. Both walls with gates and the surroundings are seen well from here. Babur's looks were involuntarily riveted to the hungry people – Allah almighty, they are trying to catch the turtle birds, that are making nests under the eaves! The birds became watchful: in a city where there are no bread crumble and food remains in the streets, it is not easy to subsist for the birds as well. But the birds can fly over the walls. And what about the people? If somebody succeeds to catch a dog or a cat then the fights begin: they want to take away the booty from the lucky man.

There is a big stable behind the madrasah. Formerly hundreds of servant horses were alimented here. Now they are about ten, not more. The battle near Saripul brought big damage, and even more – the famine: the horses were slaughtered for food for the palace inhabitants. And now even for these ten horses during a month's time they can't find grains. The grass was fed earlier. The horses and camels were fed even with the leaves of the trees. And wet bast, too.

Babur sees from the roof of the madrasah, from above, Takhir preparing such kind of "fodder" together with the yellow-moustached Mamat in the stable yard. The brave fellow this Takhir is. In the Saripul battle he distinguished himself even among selected nukers, those, who fought to the bitter end of the battle, and gave Babur the possibility to cross Zaravshan. Recently Babur has heard the story of his marriage. His wife Robia, whom he found again after so many trials, was taken to serve Babur's mother Kutlug Nigor Khanum in order not to become a victim of famine.

And Mamat also became Babur's nuker. Last week he went through the drain to harvesting in the out-of-town gardens, to eat fruits behind the fortified walls, but was caught by an ambush of

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<sup>143</sup> Asad (means "Lion") month is from July 21 up to August 20

khan's soldiers; he called himself a hungry craftsman and was spared, but for "education" his ear was cut off. So one can never know when he has luck and when has not. The other brave nukers' noses were cut off by Kupakbiy's nukers.

Now Mamat wears his hat clapped on to the very ears. Sometimes he consoles himself:

— "You can hide ears, but how to hide when one has no nose?"

Oh, merciful God, what misfortunes Babur himself has collapsed on the heads of such ordinary Samarcand people like Mamat in these seven months of siege! Babur himself didn't forget that mad woman whose son had swollen of mill cake and died. And now her words are twanging like a sentence of an avenger fate in Babur's soul: "May the same happen to you!"

The hunger gradually crawled from the poors hut to the places of nukers, beks and then to the palace of the sovereign. It is already ten days Babur himself hasn't eaten bread. The flour is over. In the morning a handful of dried grapes with tea is brought to him, and in the evening - a bowl of soup with tough camel meat on the gold trays. The gold luxurious dishes – for what one needs it if there is no bread? The pieces of bitter lines about deceitful need of gold heavily emerged from the depth of his consciousness, but it's not the time for Babur to think about poems.

The six month old Fakhriniso is weeping loudly: Aysha begin being skinbound has no milk. She found a lying-in woman and made her a nurse for the daughter – and by this they incurred the disaster – the woman turned to be from the family infected with cholera. The daughter died in two days!

Babur brought on his hands the little corpse wrapped with shroud to the grave. He cried: "May cholera infect me too to get rid of all the sufferings at once!" – and with this bitter hope he kissed the cold lips of the baby. His pride, the child of his victory, Fakhriniso, was buried; Babur with all his nature felt that a piece of his life and the pride of the former victories were buried.

The more grief tighten the throat of the sieged city the more its enemy's overcrowded. For five months Samarcand has been waiting the support from Babur's uncle from Herat – strong Husayn Bayqarah; from his uncle from Tashkent – Makhmud khan. Babur wrote letters to them. The humbled letters they were. But everything was in vain. Now Babur must rely only on himself. There is no help and it won't

come. Shaybani Khan also understood that; every night he awakes the people of Samarqand with the rumble of drums and bray of karnays – national musical instruments, long trumpets with a mouthpiece. The khan's heralds having climbed to the high embankments before the walls appeal the people to come to the khan's side, tempt them with tasty food. They promise to beks and nukers profitable positions, and surely some beks leave Babur, they secretly climb over the walls, crawl through the pipes of drains.

Once even the head of Babur's personal guards had ran away. Who can be trusted? Once at night Babur called Takhir.

– "Takhirbek, on the Gur Emir tomb it is written in Arabic: "Before the world turns from you, leave it yourself". So this time has come. If cholera took me away everybody would be better. But cholera didn't take me..."

– "May God keep you safe my lord! You are our only hope and support!"

Takhir lost so much weight that+ his shoulder bones seemed to tear his chakmon; the scar on his face swelled, the eyes fell in deeply. But they still shone!

– "The support has been destroyed, Takhirbek! Yesterday I composed such a verse:

*Oh, my soul, don't condemn Babur when he wishes a better world,  
What except sufferings and grief in this world to wait for?*

Takhir said shaking his head:

– "It is true, mirza: there is nothing but bitterness in our days now! But in a month one half of the days is dark, and another one is light. There is still some might in our hands, and swords are on our belts..."

– "So what should we do?"

They looked at each other – the sovereign and the nuker, a soldier and a soldier. And Babur said for them both:

– "We should go to the last means...We'll gather all we can into one fist, choose the convenient moment and try to get out! If the days of our lives are not over, by Allah's will, we'll break through, if they are over, then we'll die with the swords in our hands."

– "Please God, we'll break through, my lord!"

– "Only Kasymbek knows about this secret plan now. You keep this secret, too. Prepare yourselves, friends, get ready..."

At night Takhir met Kasymbek. For a long time they watched through the loopholes the location of fires of Shaybani Khan's camp: they found that the main forces of the enemy are dislocated near the Feruza and Chorrah gates, and behind the Shayhzoda gate the fires are scattered in a dilute way. They should gather nukers and the strongest horses, they should gather, prepare...

## VII

It was not defined to Babur to fall with the sword in his hand on the heap of the enemies killed by him. In the height of the preparation to the breakthrough his mother and grandmother came to his room of solitude, followed by Kasymbek, moving in abashed manner with his hip ahead.

– “My grandson and sovereign, in the last months Esan Davlat begin became very crooked, and Babur heard her words from somewhere below – Shaybani Khan has sent a man with the peace suggestion!”

The word “peace” sounded like salvation. But was Shaybani khan a rescuer, a peacemaker? Babur looked at his grandmother and then at mother with distrust. Kutlugh Nigor Khanum looked tear-stained and depressed. A scroll with a dangling aureate brush was in Esan Davlat begin’s hands.

– “Here is the khan’s message”, – said the grandmother and looked at the paper in her hand in a special way.

Why was the khan’s message at Esan Davlat begin’s hands?

Babur asked:

– “Who has delivered it?”

– “One respected dervish. He is from the nakshbendys<sup>144</sup>, an old man, and his spiritual teacher was Yahya Khoja.”

Babur looked at his mother:

– “Did he bring it to you?”

– “No”, – Kutlugh Nigor Khanum shook with her head sadly.

Esan Davlat begin confessed to Babur in a confused way stretching the scroll:

– “It was sent to Khanzoda begin.”

– “It’s completely surprising!”, – Babur took the letter, examined it apprehensively, squeamishly not opening the scroll.

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<sup>144</sup> Nakshbendy is one of the major spiritual orders of Sufi.

- "It is hard to say what I must say", - Esan Davlat begin stopped. "But I have to tell it... Shaybani Khan has heard a lot about our Khanzoda's beauty. It turned out that he feels affection to her. There is a poem about this in his letter."

This year Shaybani Khan became fifty years old, he married his sons long ago, and he already has grandsons. With the wrath on his face Babur opened the scroll, and his look found the lines at once:

*I am allured by you; I am dying from longing and love,  
The passion is raging in me; I am burning from the passion of love.*

Babur threw the letter to the carpet:

- "Have you forgotten how last year this khan charmed Zukhra begin, the mother of Sultan Ali Mirza with similar bad poems? How can one believe Shaybani's letter?"

Kutlugh Nigor Khanum sighed sadly. And Esan Davlat begin with an ostensible coolness began the talk about the fact that if it were the other time they would even strain to read such a letter, but now everybody's life was hang by a thread, and as for her, she thought, she was an old woman, lived her life, ate her palaw<sup>145</sup> a lot, it's no difference for her to leave this frail world five days later or earlier, but it is for him, the young, her lord, the only child of her son, the apple of her eyes.

Babur objected to her - sometimes calmly, sometimes excitedly-angrily, but the old woman conducted her line: it wouldn't do for them, the young, to die here and that Khanzoda begin is cleverer and kinder than them all, she understood everything, she agreed.

Babur shouted:

- "I don't believe! My sister, the flower of beauty and charm in the harem of the old dirty heath resident! No, no! It is dishonest! It won't be!"

Kasymbek interfered:

- "My lord, we will go to the breakthrough and we will burst... or die. But one way or another, Shaybani will take Samarqand and then he will reach his purpose by force."

Kutlugh Nigor Khanum hardly restraining herself till this moment, sobbed bitterly in answer to the inquiring son's look.

- "Where are you going to go? Are you going to the unavoidable death? Oh, merciful Allah, take away my life, it's better than to doom

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<sup>145</sup> Palaw is a national Oriental dish, consisting of rice flavoured with spices and cooked in stock, to which meat, poultry, or fish may be added. Here it means: to have seen the life enough.

me to these black days! Khanzoda begin is my first beloved child, the confidante of my soul; she consoles me in my widow loneliness! How can I live without her, o my God? How can I give my daughter to the enemy's claws?"

And the grandmother spoke for a long time, mother was sobering, and the faithful Kasymbek was worried by the doubts.

- "Well, that will do", - Babur said. "I want to talk to begin herself!"

He was waiting for his sister, burning with impatience. And when she entered at last, he understood at once looking at her face: she had determined something serious.

Babur settled his sister opposite himself, looked narrowly at Khanzoda begin's face in silence. Her cheeks fell in, her lips withered. But her big eyes were beautiful as before, sparkling and desperate decision was seen in them.

- "Sister, did you agree to Shaybani Khan's suggestion? Are our grandmother's words true?"

- "What else had I to do?"

- "I know, I know... my defeat flung us all into hopelessness. But your brother is still alive. I am not going to capitulate to captivity, and everybody has only one death, and nobody can avoid it. And if we break through, if we are alive, we'll return and take you. And if my days are counted, then I will die with the sword in my hands. Then you may agree... Then nobody will say: "Babur has turned to be such a man: to save his life he sacrificed his sister". I prefer death to such a disgrace! Don't agree begin!"

The eyes of Khanzoda begin, extinguished, clouded over with tears. No matter how brave Babur could be, he would not break the siege - he has no might for this, she knows it. Well, he himself knows this and his resoluteness is the resoluteness to die.

That's why he doesn't invite her to join their breaking detachment in battle armor. She loved the brave brother, who had pure soul, more than her life - that's why she had decided to give herself to the enemy and rescue him from the death.

But is it possible to tell him this all as frankly as she thinks? If he knew that she guessed about his intentions to die in the battle and to put off the load of personal responsibility for the decision his pure soul cannot face up to - oh, then he by any means would hinder his

sister to give herself as a victim. And then they all are fated, and if he dies – only poison or dagger will remain for her.

– “Baburjon, don’t doom yourself on untimely death because of me. It is enough that we suffered from Ahmad Tanbal!”, – Khanzoda mopped up the tears with her palm. She spoke quickly and hotly: “I believe in your great future, my amirzoda. The others don’t know, but I know that such rare talents are not born to this world very often! Take care of yourself! For great affairs! For great poems! Don’t break your fate with the fate of your unlucky sister!”

– “Why to speak this way, my sister? We all are guests ...all”, – Babur stumbled – “are favorites in this false changing world! And you and me – are the children of the same mother!”

– “But I was born as a girl! And then – I am already twenty five, and I am still alone. I am not fated to live with the one I love. All my hopes are crushed. And I don’t have happiness in anything. Till what time I will be near you as an old maid, my lord? It’s enough; I must try a woman’s fate.”

– “But ... do you think it is possible to become a wife for this old man having his grandsons?”

– “I despaired to search, Baburjan! There is no difference for me now, young or old.”

– “And do you... remember what you told me that time in Osh? “Believe your heart!” Can one deceit oneself, the own heart, Khanzoda? How can it forget all the grief this cruel and sly khan Shaybani brought us? To forget his meanness and cunning – just in the story with Zukhra beginm?!”

Khanzoda-begin began to sob bitterly. Babur went on:

– “We were born by the same mother. Let us have the same fate! You know: we decided at night to go to the breakthrough.”

“Get ready to go with us. May be we’ll break the ring!”

Oh, how much Khanzoda begin wanted to put on man’s clothes again, a helmet and a lighter chain armor and go together with her brother. In fact, is it better to die in the battle than to feel sad in the harem of the old voluptuary? Khanzoda begin suddenly asked under the influence of this impulse:

– “When, when shall we go?”

– “Tonight”, – Babur answered calmly and firmly.

And suddenly the thought of her brother, who could die this very night, that the thread of his rhymes, his conversations, his love towards her will burst – pierced her and she cried:

– “Not today! No, no!”

Babur rose from his place:

– “Begin, if you don’t hark to your brother’s words, then obey the order of your lord! You will go with us! And now – there is enough time – go to your room and prepare.”

Khanzoda begin rose from the kurpacha, came closer to Babur in silence, and drove to his chest with her face. This way she said good-bye to her brother.

At midnight, Babur, Kasymbek, Kutlugh Nigor Khanum, Aysha begin and Takhir with his wife Robia gathered at the Shayhzoda gate. Kutlugh Nigor Khanum, Aysha begin and some other women sat to the wagon, harnessed with the mightiest horses and put into the very middle of the detachment. There was no Khanzoda begin in the wagon and among the horsemen.

From the inquiries it became clear that an hour before their gathering Khanzoda begin together with the grandmother went to the opposite city wall, to the Chorrah gate. Kutlugh Nigor khanum constantly crying with her already husky voice told how she persuaded her daughter not to do this and on the contrary her grandmother conversely persisted the granddaughter could make her intention true.

Babur turned to the nukers. He found Takhir.

– “Race to the Chorrah gate! Find Khanzoda begin and pass her my order. Tell her urgently to come here! Say, till she won’t come we will not leave!”

– “My lord...”, – Kasymbek began, but Babur shouted not listening to him:

– “Race quicker, Takhir!”

The nuker raced through the city. The sparks flew out of his horse’s hooves on the stone pavements. Having reached the Chorrah gate he saw that an ornately decorated cart, where Khanzoda begin was going, surrounded with horsemen with torches in their hands, had already passed the bridge through the ditch.

The siege during many months made tired the khan’s troops as well. There everybody was looking forward for peace too. Many people knew that peace would be reached at once if Babur’s sister

became the khan's wife. And Shaybani knew that this time he wouldn't behave like he behaved with Zukhra, quite another woman was going in the rich wagon to him. Maverannahr should be rather tied to his horse with an honest woman and long-expected peace, than with new blood streams... Besides they say that Khanzoda begin is really fairly beautiful.

Shaybani ordered and the drums rolled, the pipes played joyfully in honor of the beauty bringing peace with her. A numberless army of Shaybani met Khanzoda triumphantly.

Takhir saw all this at first through the open gates, then from the wall. He came down, sat on his horse and again raced through the city to Shayhzoda gate.

The sounds of joy from Shaybani's camp reached the place too. Babur was not only sore with all that happened but shocked. For a short moment he believed that Khanzoda begin was afraid of remaining an old maid, she was bedeviled with the bitter misfortunes of her brother and came to Shaybani Khan willingly. To have gorged and may be joyful life.

– "There is no faithfulness in this world!" – Quietly and bitterly said Babur to himself, turned his horse and ordered: –" Open the gate!"

It was opened with caution. In the night darkness they almost noiselessly put down the bridge through the ditch. Horsemen and pedestrian soldiers with the wagon in the middle carefully crossed the ditch. Danger was everywhere. It seemed that behind every tree was their death waiting for them. But Kasymbek not in vain learned scrupulously the position of the khan's watches; he led the detachment on impassability, often crossing the aryks and ravines, carrying the wagon almost on hands.

Was it a wonder, as the ignorant people told later, or maybe Esan Davlat begin's people from Samarqand spiritual circles had secret talks with Shaybani Khan and beforehand put the condition that for the sister Babur would get the possibility to leave Samarqand, and the sly khan gave a "quiet" order to the watches not to hinder Babur, but one way or another they get out of the besiegement safely.

Khanzoda begin doomed herself to a sorrowful life to save her brother from death and her mother from disgraceful captivity – this was not known to Babur, but Kutlugh Nigor Khanum knew this. And the louder karnays and surnays, woodwind musical instruments,

broke into a palace, foreshowing a great feast, wedding and victorious simultaneously, the more she burst out with tears.

## TASHKENT. URA- TUBE. ISFARA. THE SPRING UNDER AVALANCHE

### I

Tashkent. This city has not experienced the miseries of war already for fifteen years, the Tashkent gates – all the twelve – are open, and people can enter the city and leave it easily.

An autumn, blessed peaceful autumn... The gardens on the banks of the arysks Bozsuv and Salar were washed with still warm rains. The leaves on apricot and cherry plum trees saying farewell to the branches colored scarlet. On the mountains of Chatkal that are seen in the distance, snow gratifies one's eyes.

The Tashkent, autumn abundant with fruits, the bounty of this land, the beauty of valleys and softness of winds, streaming from the mountains – all these reminded Babur of the time of his youth. He was sixteen when he visited these places for the first time, drank water from the spring of holy Ukash below Hadra, in mahalla<sup>146</sup> Ukchi he ordered bows, arrows and bow-strings to the famous craftsmen. That very time he made pilgrimage to the grave of his grandfather Yunus Khan, buried in Shayhantahur.

That unclouded time seemed to be so far. Dusted, tired to the half dead condition with the dragging pain which was constantly nesting in his soul now, he entered with the forty beks and nukers (he decided to leave the rest to wait for him in Ura-Tube) the Besh Yoghoch gate and through the mahalla Karatash headed for the palace of his uncle Makhmud Khan. The nephew didn't like the uncle very much, and the uncle didn't like his nephew very much, but the last time Babur came here the khan ordered to the chief of city administration to meet him at the very gate.

Today Kasymbek in annoyed and alarmed manner reported that there was no daruga<sup>147</sup>.

Babur smirked bitterly:

– “This time we came having lost everything like the beggars to get alms, honorable Kasymbek! Don't wait for either special laurels or just hospitality.”

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<sup>146</sup> Mahalla is a city district size of a block of houses with local government in Islamic countries.

<sup>147</sup> Daruga - from mong. a ruler, a governor

Indeed in the palace of Makhmud Khan Babur was met rather coldly. His nukers were not allowed to enter the Arq<sup>148</sup>. Kasymbek darkened more.

– “In Samarqand we prepared for the unavoidable death, we were looking for the deliverance of the hardships in it. Are these small pricks more offensive for our ambitions than those horrors? Trifles, my friend, absolute trifles. Yesterday on the way I composed a rhyme, listen:

*For the sake of the illusive power, don't torture yourself,  
For the sake of the doubtful honor, don't humiliate yourself.”*

– “It is true, my lord. This frail world isn't worthy of anybody's tears!”

In the khan's ante-room Babur had to wait. The official who was busy with the rites – a fat man in brocade chapon and with a long staff topped with a gold knob – explained arrogantly that “sovereign lord, his Excellency Makhmud Khan is busy having conversation with the messenger of the warrior-calif his Excellency Shaybani Khan”. It became uncomfortable in Babur's soul. Is it really that the unpleasant rumors he heard when he lived at his aunt's place in Ura- Tube for two months after he had lost Samarqand can be true? There he got to know that Shaybani Khan had sent a messenger to the uncle with rich gifts and suggestion to divide Maverannahr: he gives the Fergana valley to Makhmud-khan and in exchange for it he gets a right to have Ura- Tube. If such rumors turn to be true then Babur would have no place to live, he will have to leave Maverannahr forever.

And he had a secret hope to assure Makhmud-khan in Shaybani khan's artful ambition of power, to persuade him to the cooperative fight with the foreign invader!

At last the official with the knob got from the khan (from the uncle!) the order to let Babur enter the room, where by the way Shaybani's messenger hadn't left yet. Babur entering noticed him at once at the little table with a chessboard; it was huge and very fat Janibek Sultan.

Makhmud Khan, a well-shaped man with well-groomed moustaches and beard, smiled gladly, and Janibek shook his head with a pity: the ruler of Tashkent won the game. Babur turned redder. He, Makhmud-khan's nephew, hung about in the ante-room. They haven't seen each other for four years, he has come to his relative in the grief

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<sup>148</sup> A fortress

and insult, and his relative at this time was playing chess with his enemy's messenger! Babur understood – and who won't understand? – The hidden sense of the issue. "His Excellency" Makhmud Khan, surely showed to the messenger that he respected 'His Excellency' Shaybani Khan, the winner, more than his own loser nephew.

Babur understood all this, but controlled himself, made an appearance that he didn't notice anything humiliating for himself, and looked at the messenger as if it was an empty place.

– "Your Excellency, khan and my relative! I am glad to see you healthy – may it not be shaken by the craftiness of your enemies!"

Waiting till Janibek Sultan left Babur was silent. Makhmud Khan expressed the special honour towards the messenger, conducting him to the door. Then he invited Babur to sit down to the brocaded kurpacha by the right of himself.

– "You are welcome, mirza! Don't get excited and don't give yourself to the power of this today's depressed condition of yours. These sad for you days will pass by. You are still young, my nephew, from ten flowers in the flower garden of your life even one doesn't blossom yet."

– "Many flowers of my flower garden withered before they blossomed, uncle. One wing of mine burned of the fire caused by Ahmad Tanbal; the second one was burned by Shaybani. May Allah not let you find yourself between these two pernicious fires!"

Makhmud Khan understood these words in his own way:

– "It's true; it is dangerous to fight at once with two rulers. That's why we accepted Shaybani Khan's messenger, not Tanbal's one."

– "But Shaybani is one hundred times more dangerous than Tanbal! Tanbal is a small vulture; he took away Fergana valley in his teeth and was glad. And the booty Shaybani wants – is the whole Maverannahr. And not only this! He will try to capture Khorasan and the whole Iran. Did you pay attention to his title – "warrior-calif"? "The highest divine"? And he likes being called "the second Iskander"."

"Shaybani, like Iskander Zulkarnay<sup>149</sup>, shot for the whole world! For the souls of all the Muslims – he is the calif, the spiritual leader!"

His nephew's hot temper and his arguments' consistence made impression on Makhmud Khan. But the Tashkent khan didn't show it,

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<sup>149</sup> Zulkarnay means "two-horned", that was the Oriental nickname of Alexander the Great

he only submerged to his thoughts, as if he remembered what Shaybani's messenger had told him.

– “We suppose that Shaybani Khan has no intentions to attack us. Considering a lot of information his looks are directed to the south – Hissar, then Khorasan and Iran.”

– “My lord, uncle, the khan's messenger by this tales wants to put to sleep your vigilance! Remember the history: what conqueror before he takes Tashkent and Fergana will go to campaign to conquer Khorasan and Iran? Genghis<sup>150</sup>? No. Amir Timur? No. First, Samarcand, Tashkent, Andijan must be conquered, and then relying on them – and only after this you may conqure Khorasan or Iran. Doesn't Shaybani understand this?”

The possibility of Shaybani Khan to attack Tashkent scared Makhmud Khan too. That's why he called his younger brother Olach Khan, who ruled in the area behind the Issyk Kul, 15 thousand soldiers now on their way, about in a month Olach Khan will be in Tashkent. Shaybani Khan's people by certain found out about this callusion of the two brothers. That's why the messenger arrived to Tashkent, they want to come to an agreement, it is clear. And he, Makhmud Khan, also knows the generalship abilities of Shaybani and doesn't want the war with him. The nephew Babur considers the war unavoidable. Why? Maybe because Shaybani beat him and Babur wants revenge?

To know better the intentions of his nephew Makhmud khan asked:

– “Well, mirza, let's suppose that Shaybani Khan will unavoidably attack us. What must we do?”

– “We all who stand against Shaybani's desires must gather and covenant the union! To beat him with one fist!”

Makhmud Khan was examining Babur with his sly hazel eyes:

– “Should we covenant with you too, my mirza?”

– “Not only with me. I have another uncle, our brother, Olach Khan!”

– “Well, I will join my troops with the army of Olach Khan and we'll have now thirty thousand soldiers. Then we will join your army – how many soldiers will we have then?”

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<sup>150</sup> Genghis Khan, the founder and emperor of the Mongol Empire

Only 250 men remained with Babur, and Makhmud Khan knew this. He decided to cool the militant fever of the nephew, to show his place among the... mm... real khans.

Babur again turned red: his uncle's blow reached its purpose. But the nephew was not going to lose his dignity.

– “My lord! The fate-step mother flung me to the misfortune. But remember: before drinking the poison of defeat we had tasted the sweet drink of victory. So I dared to open my soul to you, to call to the union.”

– “It is good that you are so frank. Well, nephew, if there is a possibility – will you again fight with Shaybani Khan?”

In Makhmud Khan's question there was a test for the nephew and the mockery at him, according to the proverb “Only the prostrate won't be satisfied with the kurash”<sup>151</sup>

– “I have reasons to fight with him again, I do”, – said Babur firmly. – “Well. Speaking about kurash, then “once it is you, who was prostrated to the ground, and another time it is another man, whom you prostrate”.

– “It is true, it is”, – answered Makhmud Khan with satisfaction.

And he thought: “And what if in the head of our troops of 30 thousand soldiers will be put brave Babur, with his experience of the wars against Shaybani we will be entirely able to win”. Well, only if Babur wins Shaybani, then people will praise Babur and not Makhmud Khan. Well, then Babur may exact Tashkent. Everybody knows: in whose hands is the army, he has the glory, he has the power.”

This way the careful and sly uncle refused the thought to put his nephew at the head of his army.

– “Oh our miserable Khanzoda begin...How hard are her days now!” – Makhmud Khan changed the talk to the family affairs. “And Shaybani Khan is a sly fox, isn't he, my nephew? Khanzoda begin is from our generation from her mother's side, and from her father's side she is a relative of Timur's offspring. He knew if he marries her he would get a lot of relatives. They say he married her according to the traditions; he made in Samarcand a rich wedding -feast!”

Babur wanted to explain how everything had happened, but Makhmud Khan, not disposed to take his nephew seriously, laid him another blow.

– “It was shameful, the disgrace incurred on us all!”

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<sup>151</sup> Kurash is a form of upright jacket wrestling in Central Asia, practiced since ancient times

And then, softening the blow, he began to assure that Babur and his mother, and his wife, weak Aysha begin (they had come to Tashkent earlier) – “our immeasurably dear guests”. They all need rest after all the bygones. And to have some rest won’t be undue thing. Tomorrow in the honor of Shaybani’s messenger will be arranged a feast, so dear nephew was invited to take part in it...”

All the reasons listed by Babur, turned to be vain. It’s clear that Makhmud Khan felt fear towards Shaybani, he ingratiated with him, hoping to buy peace for himself with consent to the “warrior-calif”. Oh, the uncle mistakes, very sorely mistakes. The peace now reigning in Tashkent was like the silence before devastating storm. He should take his mother and wife from here. Only where to take them to?

Aisha-begin is already two months in Tashkent.

Having lost her child, having gone through all hardships of siege in Samarqand, the young woman has fallen ill entirely. Aisha’s sister Rozia Sultan, the beloved wife of Makhmud-khan, took her to the palace. The best doctors took care of her, gave the best medicine. Finally they put Aisha-begin on her feet.

Babur came to thank the khan’s wife for her help. Firstly he came with his gratitude to khan’s wife. In the conversation he said that he had an intention to take his wife to Ura- Tyube. Rozia with her dark brown sparkling eyes as if justifying her nickname “karakuz-begin”<sup>152</sup>, threw up her hands:

– “Oh, no, my mirza, Aisha-begin is totally tired. We’ll not let her go.”

– “The noble begin<sup>153</sup>, what should we do if it is prescribed by our fate?”

– “Excuse me please, mirza, but everybody has his own destiny.”

– “However the floating in one boat have the same destiny, haven’t they?”

– “One fate” is good... A lot of sufferings fell on my poor sister... And “one fate”, you prepared it for her. Isn’t it enough? She came back from starving Samarqand very thin. She recovered and again all these sufferings, for what?”

Babur came already prepared to stand all these provoking remarks on his pride. But this sister-in-law’s quick change from the

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<sup>152</sup> Karakuz – dark eyed

<sup>153</sup> Begin - miss

sweetest words to the sharp reproaches and recent ironical khan's hints provoked him.

- "Begin, say frankly, do you really want to make me and your sister divorce?"

- "I didn't mean it. But... I think that's enough to suffer for you as well, mirza. Live with us in Tashkent. Permanently and calmly."

"Live like a dependent and act like a dependent. Keep your own place"

- "Thank you for your proposal. Let me be the master of my own and my wife's destiny."

He complained to Aisha-begim in private:

- "They say "God knows best". Rozia Sultan-begim knows about us not more than we and it would be better if she doesn't interfere in our life."

- "Mirza, I shared all my misfortunes with my sister."

- "Don't husband and wife have their own secrets?"

Previous wife's shyness disappeared. She gave him a sharp answer as Rozia:

- "I have nothing to hide from my own sister. And there is no sense to do it."

Babur recalled tender words: "Oh my Great shah". And now his wife calls him mirza like her uncle. Time flies quickly, people change quickly.

"So you want to have a sister more than a husband?" - Babur wanted to say something mocking, but didn't manage.

- "I am married to you, my mirza."

- "In this case I'll take you away from here. Get ready for leaving."

Aisha-begim boiled with rage:

- "Again to Ura-Tyube? I'll only remember the way there, it turns out. These travels exhausted me completely. And you know it, my darling. You know it and go on saying your opinion. If I had been healthy in Samarkand, not tormented by these journeys and pursuits, my daughter, my own blood, wouldn't have died. Now she would be one year old, she would already begin walking."

The sorrow of mother is inescapable and sacred. But Aisha was telling a lie. Babur revived memories of the terrible hour of parting with the baby; his face seemed to be covered with the cold breath of the death. Argue against? Refute?

– “There is no recovery from death, begin”, – he said severely. – “Until it comes closer to man, the sun will smile on him not once and not once will sorrow fall upon him. We are young and we experienced both of it in plenty.” – His voice became softer. – “We will live till good times, begin, you will see, we will reach, and God will make us happy and give us children. All the more in this hard time we should be together... Let’s go away together, please...”

– “I was with you all the time: here-there, there-here, and now? Did you remember about me all that time, did you look at me, my mirza? Exactly no! Problems about the state, marches, wars... You haven’t seen me for months and haven’t missed me... And I, how much did I suffer for the sake of you? Maybe I don’t deserve you? But what does serve an unloved wife for?!”

God Almighty and Omniscient, said the truth that “women grow up thinking about clothes and stupid arguments...” “... Yes, of course, sometimes I was indifferent to my wife. Did my problems care her? Did she know about them? Maybe I am seeking to take her away not because I love her so much that I’ll not be able to live without her. But for the sake of decency should a wife live far away from her husband?

Babur gave himself one more argument: he could not leave his Aisha-begin in the city, which soon would be conquered by his deadly enemy Sheybani.

– “Destiny is cruel to us. We couldn’t save Hanzoda-begin. Her sacrifice is enough for my suffering conscience, my wife. I must take you away from the coming trouble, from Sheybani-Khan.”

– “For me the calmest place is Tashkent.”

– “It’s the temporary tranquility, begin! Believe me; Sheybani is ready to come here!”

– “Under my sister’s care I am not afraid of anything. Only here I again returned to life.”

– “Alas, it’s true. But we also had happy days. Don’t you remember?”

Now she remembered nothing good.

– “Happy days? You had them? Marches, dangers, hardships – that’s what you had... And in addition your heartlessness to me.”

Such an injustice was already an offense for him. When he took Samarqand for the first time, wasn’t it she who embroidered the word “for liberator” on the sack with diamonds? And who after his second

victory whispered to him: "I am proud of you, my great shah..." To remind? That means to lose face.

- "Have you forgotten everything, begin?"
- "No, sufferings and torments, I'll never forget them!"
- "Did we have only torments and sufferings?"
- "But what else? Oh, of course, my bitter sobbing, all my refused requests as well. Now I'm alive and I thank my sister in prayers. I have had enough suffering. That'll do with humiliation! I am also the daughter of the shah!"

With trembling hands Babur opened the leather purse, that was hanging on his belt, searched for something in it, didn't find and left without saying a word. In the room, intended for servants he saw how dostorpech<sup>154</sup> took out of the box his beautiful panoply, was shaking up and ironing up them: silk clothes, decorated with gold and precious stones. Babur had surmised: for tomorrow was a feast with this fat ambassador of Sheybani. Tomorrow he would have to feast and reluctantly listen to the scornful hints and offensive unfair reproaches like those ones, which wife and sister-in-law said.

- "During tomorrow's feast", - Babur heard the voice of his faithful servant Kasimbek, - "they are going to offer to this steppe ambassador, Janibek Sultan, the seat more important than yours. How do they dare, my sovereign?"

Eh, my dear Kasimbek! He still feels to be a main vizier in the state of Babur-sovereign and as vizier he thinks that he has right to be not only the first adviser, but the first defender of the noble name of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur as well. But... but in reality, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur had neither the state nor the vizier.

And there wouldn't be Babur-dependent and Babur-sovereign as well!

- "That's enough! Really, that's enough", - suddenly he yelled. - "I refuse everything! Mister Kasimbek, I am not a sovereign more. That's all - get rid of..."

Babur snatched the chapan<sup>155</sup> with the gold decorations from the dostorpech's hands, threw them on the floor; took luxurious with precious stones turban from the table, stripped off two diamonds, presented once by Aisha-begim and threw the turban out of the door.

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<sup>154</sup> Dostorpech - the man who is responsible for shah's wardrobe

<sup>155</sup> Chapan - variant of caftan

The turban unreeled; one of its ends was lying on the threshold like a white snake.

Confused Kasimbek put his hand on Babur's shoulder.

– “My sovereign, what's up with you? My sovereign. Calm down.”

Pale Babur, suffocating, went on screaming:

– “It's all over! Forever! I want to live like a dervish! Mister Kasimbek, tell my mother about it! I am leaving for Ura-Tyube immediately! I reject to lay a claim to the throne. Who supports me, let's go together right now! The others are free.”

Having gripped two diamonds from the turban, Babur crossed the serf yard at a run. Words were knelling in his ears: “What for is the unloved wife?” it's true, true! Neither Aisha nor he loves each other, their destinies didn't coincide. Now it's necessary to let her take destiny into her hands. Wicked injustice of this woman, her small cares about herself, only about herself wounded the soul so deeply, caused the insufferable pain. Babur turned sharply and at a run entered his room, from the bottom of the trunk, where were held his notebooks, took the tobacco pouch, embroidered in silk by one Samarqand woman with bad memory. Over the years the white stuff of the tobacco pouch turned a little bit yellow – as if it became more dirty, – but embroidered word “For liberator!” was still clear.

Babur came to Aisha-begim almost calm.

– “Some time you considered me as your savior and presented me diamonds. You asked me to convey a wish – to ascend the throne and to get the crown. Now I have neither throne nor crown... I would like to go to the mountains, to live like a dervish. You are the Daughter of the sovereign. Take your diamonds back... you can present them to any new savior!”

Aisha-begim kept her head, readily took the tobacco pouch, with the calm fury hit in turn:

– “If you are going to leave me again, as I see, give me full freedom!”

– “Really? Do you want a divorce? Then as it is written in the Koran: “Let me leave with you like with my mother”. I reject. From this date you are not my wife any more! I give you threefold divorce!”

To the foot of the mountain range on the South of Ura-Tyube the spring comes late. Only to the end of the month hamal<sup>156</sup> tillage begins

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<sup>156</sup> Hamal - the name of the first month in solar year of Muslims

here. The dried apricot breaks into blossom by the month savr<sup>157</sup> in the kishlak<sup>158</sup> Dahkat, surrounded with mountains from all sides, what keep it from winds. Under the mountain range the great Piryah rises up, the top of which is covered with eternal snow.

After the outskirts of the kishlak, a sharp climb begins, you look down from its highest point at the kishlak – and it seems to spread along the bottom of the precipice.

And on the other side of the sharp climb on the slopes they plough as well. Here Takhir, barefooted, as all peasants, was driving a couple of oxen. Having turned up his sleeves one -eared Mamet is following and scattering seeds with his right hand; having became Babur's novker<sup>159</sup> he always stayed with Takhir. At some distance Tajiks from Dahkat were ploughing and planting. The soil was favorable, the weather was fine, and work was going easy. Everybody was in a good mood. In recent years Takhir knew only battles and marches, he missed the soil, and now he was ploughing with enjoyment, humming something.

Babur climbed the sharp slope. He was looking at the barefooted young men, pasturing the herds, ploughing. The poor man takes care of his shoes; they can be worn out on the local stony paths. Men here were poorly dressed, but of good cheer. And when they managed to eat to the satiety, they felt quite excellent.

Babur compared himself with them: he was healthy as well, had strong body and was full of power. In what he, twenty-two year old horseman could be worse than young men from the kishlak. He had no peace of mind; because he couldn't be here among all these majestic mountains, enjoy life as a live part of the nature.

Oh, if every trouble was only about shoes.

Babur took off his boots, left them on the boundary path and began walking along the ploughing soil.

The soil was very favorable; it smelled of spring and youth. God made the man out of dust, - it's obvious that out of such a spring, expecting, pliable soil.

Both Novkers and peasants followed Babur's action – they also wanted to walk along the soft soil. But Babur having left his boots on the boundary path, began to climb down the slope, on the sharp

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<sup>157</sup> Savr - the name of the second month in solar year of Muslims

<sup>158</sup> Kishlak - village

<sup>159</sup> Novker - soldier

stones which hurt feet. And at times he jumped down shortening the way, making his feet bleed. "What does he do it for?" - ploughmen were perplexed. Having clenched his teeth Babur went on coming down. Takhir rushed after him with boots in his hand. He came up with him in the middle of a slope.

- "My sovereign, please, put on your boots!" - Takhir was respiring heavily and quickly.

- "Come on, stop. These stones will wound your legs."

Babur had stopped and looked at Takhir's big and dark feet, and said:

- "And do you think that there are neither wounds nor scratches on your feet?"

- "Oh, my sovereign, we got used to it."

- "So I want to get use to it as well."

- "Why?"

- "Not to envy you", - Babur answered and went on moving.

Takhir, following him, smiled:

- "Shah, don't envy the simple ploughman."

With a slight offence Babur answered:

- "So, you didn't believe me either? I tell you that now I am not a shah, I refuse everything." He understood of course, that Kasimbek, all remained with him beks and Novkers have thought that everything that he said in Tashkent, was said in a fit of temper, and all these two hundred and fifty men and his mother Kutlug Nigor-khanum are here now, in Dzhakat.

Takhir breathed and said:

- "My sovereign, I believe you more than myself. But you can't refuse the position of sovereign."

- "Why? Weren't there men who were born as sovereigns, and had lived without the throne? And weren't there shahs who refused the throne?"

- "I don't know, maybe there were... But you are not such kind of person."

- "I am sort of that who experienced the deceptive flattery of power, the vanity and fuss of a sovereign's life. If such sovereigns like Jamshid and Iskander Zulkarnay turned out no more than timeservers, and having left their wealth, they died having only a shroud, nothing else..." - Babur swayed, having stumbled on the path,

Takhir wanted to help him, but Babur drew himself up, and kept his balance.

Not long ago Babur crossed the other part of the mountain that covered Dahkat, and reached the kishlak Obburdon. At that time he was speaking also about Jamshid. He ordered to carve on the stone near the brook verses in Tajik, which he composed himself, as if they were from the name of Shah Jamshid. Takhir remembered these two lines:

“Affected by my courage and power – the world has bent at the legs. In vain! The conquered world I couldn’t take it to the grave with me.”

Babur halted for a minute to have a rest, going on telling – not so much to Takhir as to himself:

– “Everything is impermanent, great states break down as soon as those die who formed them. But the poet’s verses exist for ages.”

– “I got you, my sovereign, but beks are with us.”

– “Let beks go away, they will go to fight for their profits...”

Babur, wishing to prove that he still had strength to realize such an intension, without choosing the path, went on going directly on the sharp stones. It hurt him; it was felt in his walk, in his nervously stressed face. Takhir again came up with him and again began to pray him to put on the boots.

– “Oh, my sovereign! Don’t envy barefooted men. Let God the Almighty never put you into their position.”

– “Isn’t it better than mine?”

– “God forbid that you should try life of those who are barefooted and naked, I repeat again.”

– “Good advice! And barefooted, aren’t they human beings?”

– “Yes, they are. But you were born a sovereign...”

– “I’ll ask you again: man is born a sovereign – isn’t he a human being?”

Takhir didn’t know how to support such a conversation. He knew only one thing that between ploughman or novker and shah there is a big wall, maybe more high than these mountains. Babur wanted to jump over this mountain. Nothing would come out of it. And then why Babur had such a desire – it’s clear, he had lost the hope of becoming the ruler of Maverannahr. Takhir couldn’t accept another explanation of it.

However he was different in many things from other rulers.

"My sovereign", - Takhir addressed to Babur, - "if you prefer throne to poetry, so I... what for should I be a soldier? I would be with my family, I would be devoted to you all my life, bless you... But probably it couldn't be."

Finally Babur took the boots from Takhir.

- "It's possible... And you will come back to the peasantry." He was silent for a while and added: - "I'll say later when and how we shall realize our plans. And now go to the oxen, go, leave me alone."

Takhir began to go up the slope in high spirit. Babur considered him as a close friend; spoke to him frankly, even told him a lot of strange things. No, shah will not become a ploughman, maybe a poet but, it's also unlikely. Every person has his own way. Babur was not such kind of humble person who was in the position to spend life in a quite nook. To walk barefooted for him, for the sovereign was naughtiness. Poets like to be naughty.

Takhir looked down.

Babur, holding his boots in hands, still was going barefooted. Takhir thought: "What a stubborn! If he starts something he will not give up!"

And Babur barefooted, standing the increasing pain, got to the spring. Further there was a path, which led directly to the kishlak.

Babur put on the boots. Suddenly he understood that people could interpret this strangeness not in his favor. The kishlak head, had given him his house, beks and servants, who addressed to him with words "sovereign" and "his Excellency" and bowed low, everybody considered him not as equal to themselves, but raised over them and they appreciated him not for the leading simple life at all.

Be a good sovereign, it's more important than to become one more ploughman, - Takhir had hinted at it. If he, Babur like other poor men would go barefooted, it would seem to beks that they bow to some poor man, - and then, why should they bow? His play in simplicity would wound their honor and pride.

Babur's thoughts were confused, contradicting one another. The sharp pain in legs was calming down.

The days were passing. Barefooted Babur was walking along the slopes and gradually his soles got used to the sharp stones and cold stony path.

### III

In 2-3 miles from Dahkat under the high precipice – people call it “Black” – there is a river Aksuv, that means “White”, – it’s so full-flowing and quick that it can easily whirl and take away the man who comes imprudently in its stream. Turning to the right, Aksuv spreads along the wide course, and there, in a calmer place, you can ford it.

Through the fir forest, along the path, that winded obliquely on the mountain’s slope, towards the midday, Babur came to this place of river – and here he had seen twenty horsemen crossing the river. The man who went ahead with a red fur-cap Babur recognized his true Kasimbek.

Babur didn’t want Kasimbek and Novkers to see him barefooted; he turned off the path and sat not far from the slope in the shadow of a high fir-tree.

But Kasimbek had already noticed his mirza. He stopped the horse, wetting up to the stomach during the river crossing, and jumped down artfully from the saddle. Novkers followed him, one by one. Kasimbek gave the rein to the nearest novker and made his way towards the fir-tree. He had bowed low to Babur, looked at him with sadness and said quietly:

– “My sovereign, I am sorry to tell you, but I have bad news from Tashkent!”

Babur remembered a lot of things, what had happened after his leaving Tashkent. Babur’s uncle Makhmud-khan, organizing again and again magnificent feasts, finally achieved his aim: made an agreement with the “worrier caliph”. Sheybani agreed that Makhmud would go to Ura-Tyube and he himself directed towards Gissar. However Makhmud didn’t begin invading with strength (the relative ruled still there), he made like this area was his own or his generation’s, but instead of it he with his brother Olach-khan turned arms against Ahmad Tanbal. They wanted to take away from Tanbal “paradise on earth”, Fergana valley. Firstly Sheybani approved of such expansion of the Tashkent khanate.

About three months Kasimbek wasn’t with Babur – he went to bring some news.

– “What happened? Tell me, bek!”

– “Sheybani Khan went back on his words deceitfully, my sovereign! Almost half a year your uncle had been fighting with Ahmad Tanbal in Fergana, he couldn’t cope with him; he suffered a lot

of losses and weakened. Sheybani Khan betrayed him all of a sudden. It's turned out that Tanbal and an inhabitant of the steppe had a secret agreement. How could your uncle cope with all these misfortunes? His army is broken. Sheybani Khan captured him."

Babur jumped up involuntarily:

– "Oh my God! Was Tashkent captured?"

– "Oh, don't ask me about it, my sovereign! There were two thousand soldiers in Tashkent, the reserve of arms and food at least for half a year. It was necessary to fight to the last end and save the city. But prisoner Makhmud Khan made a shameful bargain. He saved life of those who did all conditions of Sheybani Khan: he sent a letter to defenders of Tashkent, where was written that they should leave the fortress without fighting and leave treasury and harem in the fortress for the winners."

– "And entire harem, did it go to Sheybani?"

– "Yes, my sovereign! The army of the inhabitant of the steppe was sacking the city for three days. Beautiful Davlat-begim – your uncle's younger sister went to harem of Sheybani Khan's son Timur Sultan as the third wife. Sheybani Khan took as a wife the sixteen-year old daughter of Makhmud Khan. In his own age of fifty three. And Rozia Sultan-begim became a wife of that ambassador, that fatty Janibek Sultan."

God Almighty! And this man, this sly person, deceived himself, having reproached me for the destiny of my sister last year, now on the first demand he gave up his wife, daughter and sister. And his city, he gave it – the great Shash! "For the shame, which he has brought on him, all Tashkent curses him!" – Babur heard Kasimbek's words.

Why didn't Kasimbek still say anything about Aisha-begim? Yes, of course, Babur has cooled of her, divorced her, but she was his first passion in youth, was his wife, whom he missed. It's terrible if she gone to Sheybani's harem, following Hanzoda-begim!

Having gazed frightfully at Kasimbek, Babur asked:

– "Isn't Aisha-begim...? My wife with my sister?"

– "No, my sovereign!" – Kasimbek understood what worried Babur. – "No, but... I won't have the heart to say it... Aisha –begim married to khan's uncle – to fifty three year old Kuchkinchi, she became the youngest wife of him."

Babur closed his eyes with his hands:

– "Oh, what a disgusting thing!"

He didn't feel the malicious joy. He suffered for Aisha's destiny, and even for Rozia's, this arrogant person "Karakuz", who was humiliated by fatty Janibek. Who knows: maybe this fatty giant ambassador, who lost at chess to Makhmud-khan, already at that time, having noticed the beloved husband's wife, has sworn to win back somehow.

Kasimbek went on regretfully:

– “To bring oneself to do such a shameful thing to save the purposeless prisoner's life... in any case he wouldn't survive!”

– “Did they kill uncle?”

– “No, when he was captured for the first time, Sheybani didn't kill him. He put him on humiliations more terrible than death and then banished him from his sight – to the East, beyond the bounds of Maverannahr. Makhmud had found strength to gather supporters on that side; he came with a small army on the bank of Syrdarya. Near Hodjikent another battle took place; broken Makhmud-khan had been captured again this time with his two sons. Sheybani-khan spared neither them nor the unlucky father.”

– “Good Heavens!”

And again in Babur's soul there was no the shadow of malicious joy, but he could think, his cruel fate, is also cruel to those who were heartless to him. The heard he took as delusion, evil and terrible. No, such kind of fate he didn't wish to any of his offenders.

Kasimbek saw how Babur became pale, red, like a dead man, how his cheeks and fingers trembled. Babur stood up looking around aimlessly. Kasimbek offered:

– “Sit down, my sovereign; let's listen to the word of God about the indulgence to dead men.”

Babur felt the tremble in his knees, went down to the prior place, and threw back to the trunk of the fir-tree. Kasimbek, having tucked up, sat on the opposite side of him. Novkers sat half-round. Kasimbek, having raised his hands, read in a loud voice equal to the occasion suras from the Koran. Sad melodiousness of the reading, verses of the holy book, evenly pouring like water in the river, consoled the pain, supporting usual Babur's thoughts about short life and vanity of existence, the every moment of which is permanent. Having pulled himself together somewhat, Babur covered up half-mast his naked legs with the edge of chapan. After the prayer was finished and every one made a gesture with palms and said: “Amen!”,

Novkers went away and Babur and Kasimbek continued the conversation in private. Kasimbek came closer to Babur, saying almost in a whisper:

– “Sheybani Khan with his sons and commanders is eager to turn victory into the whole conquest of Maverannahr. Now they hanker after Andijan. Not today, maybe tomorrow they will come also to Ura-Tyube. It's dangerous to stay in these places, my sovereign. We should go away to Gissar through the mountains.”

The ruler of Gissar Hisrov-shah once took the throne from Babur's cousin Baysunkur-mirza, and he made another Timur's descendant blind, having pressed the burning hot spear's spike in order that he might not pretend to the throne. Babur remembered it.

– “And what for, Mister Kasimbek, running away from snow I should find myself under hail?”

– “No, my sovereign, I don't mean that you should ask for a refuge at Hisrov. Your humble servant holds secret negotiations with Gissar's beks since last year. Many of them are dissatisfied with Hisrov-shah. They say: he comes from low origin, the descendant of some crafty novker; he has no right to rule Gissar. If we appear there, beks will side with us.”

– “Again squabble for the throne? No Kasimbek. I have a bellyful of it. I need a quiet corner, where I can live like a recluse and make verses. I don't want anything else!”

From the very beginning of their meeting Kasimbek tried not to look at Babur's naked legs. The sovereign, whom he bows to, goes naked, – what a strangeness, what indecency?

– “My sovereign, and did you think about our fates? Two hundred fifty Novkers devoted to you, beks, your faithful adjutants, wishing you lucky and invoking God about it, they cherish hope that you will rise higher than before, and they live in poverty with you in mountains and deserts. And is this everything in vain?”

Faithful Kasimbek gave understanding to Babur: if he really decided to become a dervish, what for does he need all Novkers and beks? Why not let them go?

He hung his head; Babur kept silence, kept silence for a long time.

– “Forgive me for the heartlessness, but I must say you about them, my sovereign!”

– “You.. You are right. I mustn’t forget about people devoted to me. Tell me, please, honourable bek; did Hisrov-shah invite you to his service?”

– “Yes, he did, twice.”

Babur looked fixedly and sadly at the courageous Kasimbek’s face. His person to rely on, his main vizier’s short beard had begun to turn grey, but he wasn’t even 40 yet.

– “You know, Kasimbek, it’s very difficult for me to part with you! Since I lost my father, you took care of me. You are the closest and the most faithful man of all my relatives.”

– “I am grateful to you, my sovereign!”

– “And respecting you, I let you go... Let every one choose his way. Yours leads to Gissar!”

– “It is hard to listen to it. It is hard to leave you alone, my amirzoda<sup>160</sup>. Let’s leave together!”

– “No, Kasimbek, no, - now or never, – I would like to release myself from sovereign’s lives. The life of a real sovereign which I have imagined is the life in the united big state, in our united, powerful, ferocious and famous Maverannahr, – I couldn’t organize such a life, and another one – in which everybody squabbles, humbles and tramples each other, – I don’t want. Oh my Kasimbek, I don’t want a petty life. I know: one end of the chain is connected with dependent on me people, and another one – it’s me, my former habits, my pride. Without having cast off those who depend on me, I will remain in chains. And how can I release myself, I don’t know. I want, want to live close to nature, without chains, Kasimbek.”

Everything went dark before Babur’s eyes, he swung. Kasimbek had kept him, embracing him, began to cry.

For the first time Babur saw that Kasimbek could cry as well...

#### IV

If he could, walking endlessly along these high mountains, he would throw down or scatter, disperse in the heaven all those feelings that torment his soul all day long. But vexation of mind was a part of him, and the chain, as he said once, was he himself. Neither to disperse nor to throw down torments... only to pour them out into the verses. Fascinating they save, only they can put him off himself, put off fixed cries of the heart.

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<sup>160</sup> Amirzoda - successor of sovereign

*Don't ask my friend what's happened to me because I am weak:  
Flesh is weaker than soul, but my soul's flesh is more painful.  
I shake up – how will I write chapter after chapter?  
My vivid cargo is heavier than hundred iron chains.*

Rubays<sup>161</sup> follow gazels<sup>162</sup> – some favourite persons changed others.

*Oh, where is vine to become a confirmed drunkard?  
Mihrab<sup>163</sup> is not for me, I won't become a saint!  
There is no mode for me to follow the road of debauchery.  
I have no will, that's why I can't become ascetic.*

How often he doubted if he could really become a dervish, reject not only outward clothes, food and drinks, but also internal temptations of this world which is full of feelings, beauty, fight for honour and fame!

*I became a poor dervish and hid in the corner.  
Mosque's door – is not the end, door in worldly temptation – is not the way out.*

*What should I do? Where should I go? Where is the refuge for my faith?*

*I lost it on the way. I lost myself between two doors.*

He felt cordiality of poetry in nascent verses, and it seemed to him if all other doors of the world closed in front of him, the last one would remain open – the door into the poetry world, that is to the world of beauty, honor, and fame. Seeking to crucify, he felt with caution and in the same time with delight some still not spending forces and at that time he remembered Hanzodabegim's words said him at parting: "I believe in your great future. Others don't know, I know that such great people like you are born seldom!"

Yesterday there was toy<sup>164</sup> in one of the kishlaks on the bank of Aksuv. And walking along the street like an ordinary traveler, Babur had heard how a young man was singing his gazel with a fascinating voice: "Besides my soul, I haven't found a true friend". As if his heart moved in his breast, those very powers of which he was afraid and to

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<sup>161</sup> Rubay - the oriental form of versification

<sup>162</sup> Gazel - the oriental form of versification

<sup>163</sup> Mihrab - niche in mosque, pointing in the direction of Mecca

<sup>164</sup> Toy - wedding

which he was glad, had hardly broken his heart, looking for the way out.

He liked to look at the spring crashing strongly on the top of mountain Osmon Yaylau not far from the kishlak Daxkat. There are a lot of springs at the foot of mountain. But here for the first time Babur saw the spring which went out of the peak...

From here on the South we can see the great sparkling mountain Piryah – it's always in snow. Between it and Osmon Yaylau there are canyons and many high hills. Babur thought that his spring was fed by the glacier Piryah. So in order that water flows down and rises up, it should go through depths, even much deeper than precipices between the mountains. Where does his spring get force for this? His own gravity and mountain-side draw him down, but what makes it rise so high, break through cliffs, through boulders? It might break before at the foot of the mountain, but once during the earthquake, it collapses down on it and closed the former exit? And then, with new power...

Babur liked to imagine the spring's life like his own. He had collapsed. Landslide like that one which came down from steep slope in Ahcy closed exits to the spring. And the victory of nomads and sultans is one more collapse. And how many of them there were! But the spring still has the internal force; it again began to break through stones. Seething, it, born in its element, seeks and seeks for ways to break again into the bright world.

And if the spring on Osman Yaylau broke to the top, so did he, Babur should chin up, shouldn't lose hope. And his life, his power like this spring would break through. Maybe on the top of the poetry it will? And not only the poetry would it be?

Once in the afternoon lost in thoughts Babur was sitting near the spring on the top of Osmon Yaylau, in front of him the horseman shepherd appeared with two big dogs – wolfhounds. He wore chariks<sup>165</sup>; there was a white felt cocked hat with red borders on his head. He had a big knife on his belt; there was a shepherd's stick in his hands. He looked at Babur in silence, sat down near the spring, took handful of water, and had a drink. He became straight, put his hands into his armpits, and wiped them with the rough gown without lining.

– "What's up djura<sup>166</sup>, is your shah so greedy that you are walking barefooted?"

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<sup>165</sup> Chariks - shoes

<sup>166</sup> Djura - old chap

The shepherd's "mockery" offended Babur, but he asked with restraint:

- "What shah?"
- "They say Babur is in Dahkat. Are you one of his servants?"

Babur wandered about the mountains and valleys in old clothes that became brown, but his features and hands pointed to his being a noble man. So the shepherd took him for some sovereign's servant. Babur, avoiding saying too much, just answered:

- "Well, sort of..."

Having leant against the stick the shepherd looked at Babur and asked:

- "You are probably devoted to your shah, aren't you?"

Babur grinned:

- "Enough, as if I will be devoted to myself."

- "I see your shah hasn't kindness to you as has plunged you into poverty."

Now Babur looked at the shepherd attentively. He was a twenty-year-old ordinary young man with still not shaven cheeks. But he had hollow eyes full of sorrow, such eyes Babur saw in fifty-year-old men, who survived a lot.

- "Why do you ask a lot of things about shah? Do you have something to say him?"

- "I would like to meet him face to face in these mountains..."

- "And if you meet him... What would you say?"

The shepherd horseman screwed up his eyes:

- "I would ask what he had done with the heads of my father and brother."

- "With heads? Babur? You... Where are you from?"

- "I am from Chagrak!"

Babur remembered the breeders – Chagrak the Turkic tribe in Andijan Mountains. He asked surprisingly:

- "Are there Chagrak here?"

- "We came here from Osh. That time I was less than fourteen.

Babur turned up there to take away sheep and bands of horses. Shepherds answered: "We won't give you them." And then... Babur killed everybody and took away their cut heads. We came with my mother and saw: twenty dead men were lying on the ground. Without heads... It's very difficult to identify the man by his dead body. Mother was crying, hugged one dead then another... strange one..."

The terrible vision that once haunted disturbed him, again leaped to life. The bloody sack in Ahmad's Tanbal hands, rolling out men's heads on red tulips... here is the head with coagulated blood on the neck of the young, very young man. Babur shuddered: the shepherd who stands beside, his face is that particular one!

Babur jumped up from the stone, terror-stricken. He said quickly:

– “Ahmad Tanbal killed your people! Ahmad Tanbal!”

The shepherd came closer to him:

– “You... How do you know about it? Have you seen those heads?”

– “Yes, I have seen, on Yaylau... On the hilly pasture, Ahmad showed me. Since then really six years have passed... Chagrak rebelled, killed three or four Novkers. Tanbal took revenge on them.”

– “It isn’t him! People saw and told me! Babur cut off my father’s head and took it away!”

– “People told you lie. I know it exactly. I was a teenager as well. Ahmad Tanbal went into the mountains, that time I remained in Osh”,

– Babur explained in haste, having justified himself. And of course, this haste was suspicious.

The shepherd asked angrily:

– “And who are you? Aren’t you Babur?”

The dogs felt by the master’s voice that this stranger is dangerous. They began to roar, ready to attack Babur. Babur put his hand on his belt automatically. But there was neither sword nor dagger. He was wandering unarmed.

And that time, it seemed that the dogs were going to snatch at his bare legs. Fear came upon him, but he looked at shepherd’s eyes proudly.

– “I am Babur!”

The shepherd shot a look on his bare legs, and didn’t believe.

– “You... Such as you? There are no such sovereigns like you...”

– “You are right, now I am not a sovereign. It is all over and done with. Now I am poet Babur.”

On yesterday’s holiday in the kishlak the shepherd listened to Babur’s gazel with pleasure, at the end of which the poet gave his name.

*In the world Babur hasn't found another friend of his soul besides himself.*

*Get used to yourself, to such a life – you haven't found true love.*

This stranger wandered alone in the mountains - he really hadn't found anybody. The shepherd shouted at dogs:

- "Down! Buynak, Turtkuz, down!"

Having calmed dogs, he again addressed Babur:

- "If you are really the poet Babur, tell me one of your songs... I know a lot of them, I'll check."

Babur looking at the ground, became thoughtful for a moment, and then raised his head:

- "So, do you know this one? Listen!"

*My own man doesn't welcome me and the strange one turns out,*

*My beloved doesn't notice, the angry jealous man follows her.*

*You tried to do only good, to be good and pure.*

*The rumor offends Babur – you are bad in people's memory.*

The heat of these verses, the pain with which Babur read them, was passed to the shepherd, and reflected in his eyes.

- "Yes... I see... your life is not easy... well as you tell the truth, it wasn't Babur who killed my father, and it was Tanbal."

- "Tanbal... But I am responsible for my ex-beks' acts. So... now I am paying off."

The shepherd looked again at Babur's bare legs.

- "I want to believe these words as well! If I didn't believe you, so for my father's blood I would order these dogs to tear you to pieces! Goodbye poet Babur!"

Babur didn't remember how he went down the point Osmon Yalau that day, how he got the Dahkat. The past, ill-fated past of the sovereign, with inevitable fairness, blood and mud followed him. Beks create the cruelty, but people add it to him. And the conscious, like the shepherd's terrible dogs, growls and bites his heart.

How can one calm the conscience?

And in Dahkat a more terrible thing was waiting for him.

The troops of Sheybani were already in Ura-Tyube. Soldiers got the headman of the kishlak, who was going to do shopping in the city; they began to beat him, demanding to show the place where Babur hid!

The headman Tajik, with bloody lines on the face, told Babur:

– “I am not a base man to betray my guest! I led your enemies to the ravine Oktangi and I hid myself in the bush. It will be difficult for them to get out of that place; I came here through the high mountainous paths!”

Oktangi – it’s thirty miles to the East from Dahkat; it’s clear that the khan’s bloodhounds not today but tomorrow would break out also in Dahkat. Shaybani-khan promised much gold for his head... they should leave.

His mother Kutlug Nigar Khanum spoke with warmth about it to him.

– “Baburjon, we all rely only on you! Now, my dear, there is no time for dervish<sup>167</sup>. Everybody considers you as a sovereign in exile, nobody trusts another, and important beks are waiting in Gissar and everywhere. Inhabitants of the steppe are seeking you as the sovereign having the right to the throne. Dahkat gave us salt; bread for so much time, your duty is to save this kishlak from imminent trouble!”

It’s all correct, all correct; he must become the head of those who believe in him, take up arms.

He can’t escape his fate.

– “My honorable Sherimbek! I set you as the main vizier... (It was the old Babur’s uncle, the one who once in Andijan wanted to flee with him to the mountains Alatau; being happy with the position of a new vizier which was awarded to him after many years of faithfulness, Sherimbek bowed with a big gratitude.) Inform all beks and Novkers about our will. Prepare for a journey immediately! Tonight they should leave Dahkat!”

And again Babur was in armour, again hung with arms. That night his troops moved towards where the sun rises. They left for Isfara.

## V

Below Isfara-sai, striking against stones makes a noise.

Babur is sitting high up in the mountains and looking into the distance, - whitish clouds, which are floating somewhere over Hodjikent, shadow the slopes and points. The cold air is coming from the snow peaks. Spring valleys are wrapped in green.

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<sup>167</sup> Dervish - movement in Islam

Behind the silk curtain of the sky, extending above the horizon, somewhere, in the boundless distances, the mountains of Chatkal are hidden and at once Tashkent now sacked and quiet. Then Jizzak and Samarqand, Margilan and Andijan appeared before Babur's eyes. Once he went along all these lands freely.

And now on the lands of Maverannahr there was no refuge, no corner for him, where he could live calmly. Everything had passed into the hands of Tanbal and Sheybani. Not without reason Sherimbek insisted on Babur's leaving for Khorasan.

Babur didn't agree; he thought in advance: having left Maverannahr he would lose motherland, would never come back. The feeling of the motherland was not so noticeable before when he was free to live or not to live in any of its part; it makes itself known, dictates him acts and feelings.

"It is Maverannahr! I have furrowed you from end to end, poured out the light on every way winding on you, and spilled the seeds of my plans. My roots are in your flesh, my motherland. Where can I take the power to pull them out? And can't one stand for the pain of the parting, Maverannahr?"

Ahmad Tanbal and Sheybani-khan – they were "allies" - strove to bite the heads of each other, again the war of sovereigns, who are cramped, who couldn't live in a peaceful world, tormented Maverannahr. Babur's ways would open if they both left, these wolfhounds, these greedy dogs.

Cherishing slender hope for the possibility to remain in Maverannahr, Babur sent all his soldiers to Andijan – to follow the course of war events. And here was he waiting for their return to Isfara.

A month and a half had passed and there were no envoys yet. It seemed to him that days ran very slowly. Babur wandered along the mountains continually... What to do? What to attempt? If witted Kasimbek were with him, he would advise something worth. But there was no Kasimbek. There was no brave fellow Nuyan Kukaldash either – he was killed last year in Akhangaran by Tanbal's soldiers; they threw him down the precipice.

There are a lot of men who were not with him – they died, went away, gave in to the weakness and defected to the enemies. One was for pity and the others were for malice.

Let his poetic power not leave him! He tried to make verses, but he didn't manage to do it, his soul wasn't disposed to rhyme the ringing verses.

Toward the evening the mountains were clouded with fog. From the fir forest along the foggy paths, Babur went down to the valley to the bank. It was cramped, cold and dark there and the fog kept like a dense grey wall, so one couldn't distinguish the stream, only by the crash one could guess that Isfara-sai was here, the river didn't disappear, it still carried the waters and moved the stones.

Babur's stop was on the bank, in the wide glade with some big hills in the middle, where his red cloth yurt was. Near there was the octagonal white yurt of Kutlug Nigora-hanum. And the rest of the tents were at some distance from these main ones.

It seemed to Babur as if all tents ran to different places; the fog like mould covered them.

He met people; they welcomed him as welcomed sovereigns. Babur bowed the head slightly in response – it was the palace custom.

He turned to Mamadali's yurt, the keeper of books. A great deal of rare manuscript books was put in special boxes, covered with leather, non-pervious; it was the load for five-six camels. These boxes were always with Babur; looking sick, yellow-faced Mamadali accompanied Babur in all his marches. The old man took care of them like a mother cares of her child.

What would Babur like to read now? Oh, yes, something about history.

Mamadali was in the habit of washing his hands before taking book.

– “Your slave will bring you them immediately to the yurt, my sovereign!”

Babur leafed through books that tell of life of noble military leaders and crown-headed sovereigns. He knitted his brow reading the florid phrases, rhetorical comparisons, tried to separate legends from the truth of events.

Everywhere were glorified, victories were glorified with great pomp, only victories of lucky conquerors.

Obviously, such books of praise are being written about Sheybani-khan. Babur knew that Binoiy has gone over to Sheybani; they, both he and Muhammad Salikh, everyone wrote his “Sheybaniname”. How would they describe the battle between Babur

and Sheybani? Would they praise to the skies the winner and abuse Babur in every way, would hung on him former and null sins, - how would people know the truth?

Babur put aside books including only the description of the magnificent triumphs of conquerors. The silk wrinkled shawl, in which the keeper of books wrapped them up with care, he threw it near. He rose from the table and came up to the box with his documents. He has thought. He has taken out the notebook called "The Past".

Look: Babur wrote in this notebook only how he took away Samarqand from Sheybani Khan and then he had never touched it! It turns out that he hasn't wanted to tell about his next defeats and disasters to anybody, even to himself. But he couldn't escape from them, unwritten on the paper, they turn in his memory with torment and hard like stone mills. They say "if you hide your illness, fewer will give itself way". Wouldn't be more worthy to describe trustfully all events, all details in this notebook? Maybe then the pain would go out and he would feel relieved?

Babur began to write quickly about the Saripul battle; about humiliations he had to endure after the defeat.

He wrote for himself, for the report before his own conscience. He wrote trustfully and simply, having realized clearly that the flowery eloquence like that one by which a lot of books were written is not the eloquence for his aims. He wrote like a man who shared the truth about himself with a friend, capable to empathize with the evident and secret in his soul. The friend whom he believed was his notebook. Therefore he was. Not without reason in his gazel, which became a song, he said: "I haven't found a true friend besides me", not in vain...

Babur was confessing his sins frankly and without self-humiliation.

And about sword his gift to Tanbal... About unlucky chagrak... And about how his feet became insensitive to sharp stones on the mountain paths...Everything was in this notebook, and continuing it now, he felt how the fire of inspiration captured his soul, like he wrote these verses.

If he couldn't escape from his fate of being sovereign, predefined for him from his birth, he would tell trustfully about its hardships and trials! None of the sovereigns, whom Babur knew, told frankly about

all their experience. But people always wish to know the truth. And if he, Babur could slake this wish even if a little bit, so then the gift given by God wouldn't be wasted and people would learn the lessons from his unfortunate life.

People, another people... So he wrote the book "The Past" not only for himself, for the conscience sake. Well then. It's really like verses. The verses are composed to slake the wish of own heart, but they capture the hearts of other men, become the songs for everybody; isn't it happy? The getting with sword is taken away by the help of another sword. The getting with the feather of a poet or trustful historian is taken away by nothing...

Babur didn't see how servants had lit candles and brought food. Almost all night he was writing, not touching food and water...

## VI

Before sunrise, Takhir arrived at a gallop.

Immediately, without having had rest, Babur received him to get to know about the events in Andijan. Was it a joke: almost a month and a half he had been unaware!

Takhir told for a long time under the light of candles in Babur's yurt. The main thing he told immediately: Andijan was in Sheybani's hands. The city was robbed. A lot of Andijan people had already died after the seizure of the city. Among them there was Babur's second agiler that was with Takhir.

Takhir was so tired that he could hardly stand. Babur sat down on the kurpacha<sup>168</sup> and asked Takhir to join him. How could he manage to know all the details? Takhir applied for work to one bay<sup>169</sup> in kishlak Hodja Katta near Andijan. Of course the bay didn't guess who he was in truth. Takhir listened very attentively to all conversations, questioned very carefully. And when he brought goods to the bai's shop, many things he saw himself.

Ahmad Tanbal having suffered a defeat in the open field under Andijan was locked in the fortress. The siege began. Hunger began in the fortress, diseases and discords intensified. ("Like in Samarcand" – Babur thinks to himself.) Beks, who once had left Babur, defected to Tanbal, now having left Tanbal ran to Sheybani-khan. Khan's worries finally tore into the city. Ahmad Tanbal with his brothers and close

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<sup>168</sup> Kurpacha - quilt

<sup>169</sup> A rich landowner

allies hid in the arc; but Andijan's arch within the city, -it's easier to storm the fortress from the roofs of near houses. Ahmad Tanbal understood it as well as Sheybani. He decided to ask Sheybani-khan for mercy. He sent one old man who would say khan the following: "I will give all my acquired wealth, the whole harem to the worrier caliph, the holy imam; I swear to serve him loyally, - let him save my life!" The old man didn't return. The attack began. .. Tanbal and his brothers came in panic to the gates of the fortress, opened them, having hung their swords on the neck – it is the sign of the voluntary surrender and of the hope for generosity of conqueror. Timur Sultan ordered to Novkers: "Don't capture them; they are not worth it, cut them!" Tanbal and his brothers were shredded to pieces. They put cut heads into the sack.

– "Probably they boasted of them to Sheybani", – Takhir finished his story.

– "Oh, my God!" – escaped Babur's lips.

Here is the retribution! The betrayer raised his sword on him, on Babur, - and he himself was killed with the sword... For the death of Hodja Abdulla hanged by cruel Tanbal, at the same gates Tanbal met painful death. For the heads of poor chagrak heads of Tanbal and his brothers rolled out of the sack. And Sheybani – as Babur imagined at that moment – touched them with disgust, turned over with the toe of a boot... where was this ugly mug, Ahmad Tanbal, having given a lot of troubles to many people? Show me him, but I don't know him by sight, I have had no occasion to meet him, but Sheybani was fastidious to take it, this head, with thin beard, with sharply prominent cheekbones.

Shocked by this picture Babur exclaimed some more times:

– "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! My God..."

Is it the cruel justice? Is it retribution? But Sheybani-khan excelled in cruelty the very Ahmad Tanbal! And why does heaven present such a bloodthirsty khan with a sword?

And on the other hand – just think, - the unification of the broken Maverannahr, the great aim, which Babur sought to, unite powerful Maverannahr, his, Babur's Maverannahr, - doesn't Sheybani really get it? But why wasn't it Babur who did it? By what was Sheybani-khan more powerful: by perfidy, cruelty, inhuman sincerity of thoughts? And by one more thing: fanaticism, Sunni animation of

faith that made Sheybani's worries disdaining the amenities of life as well as justice and the very death.

Yes, in this world to become the conqueror one should be like Sheybani. And he, Babur, would like to be an enlightened sovereign; he spent a lot of time and power for poetry, art, architecture, though about the humanity – because of all these things he lost. But what is more important the humanity or power, even in the united Maverannahr? Isn't it clear?

– "My sovereign", – Takhir's voice distracted Babur from his cares about the power and humanity, – "I have heard that khan's servants are seeking for you. It may happen that his scouts are already in Isfara!"

So, I should think about saving of life and the continuation of battle! Tanbal's defeat is a new collapse that fell down on the spring. All ways out are closed, by the help of which the spring could shoot outside... here, in its country. If we don't cross quickly, very quickly the mountain range, don't go to Khorasan, Sheybani will block the way, the last one of all possible.

Babur has forgotten that in front of him there is a simple novker; he shouted in a constrained voice:

– "Isn't it enough for me, all these troubles? Now I have to lose my motherland?"

Takhir saw Babur's tears, hardly keeping his ones, with trembling lips he swore:

– "Sovereign, to live in a strange land is difficult to any person be it shah or novker, or ploughman... I won't come back to Kuva, won't come back to native places. I won't come back because they will revenge on me for my serving you. And I won't come back also because... I can't part with you... I rethought a lot of things while I was coming here from Andijan. I will be with you, always and everywhere."

Babur for a long time considered Takhir like an honest, brave soldier and the simple, trustful ploughman, one of those peasants who believe that the salvation from all bad and unjust is in the hands of the fair sovereign.

– "But I couldn't become the desired sovereign for all of you!" – Babur said unexpectedly, answering his thoughts. – "If I become him or won't become in the future – it's unknown..."

Takhir kept silence. Babur broke the conversation. So they were sitting in silence opposite each other, the sovereign-exile and his novker; outside the dense cloth of the yurt, flying into the towering rage from the outgoing silence, Isfara-sai was roaring.

Misfortunes fell upon these so different men, brought them together. The worriers, fighting side by side so many years, for the first time they talked with each other so frankly. The words which Takhir wouldn't decide to say another time were said by him this time, in the twilight dark of the shah's yurt:

– "Sovereign, I am a simple novker, but I am attached to you like relative. By poetry, your courage and kindness... I believe that the great future is waiting for you! Many of those who hurt you, have already disappeared. How many mortal dangers escaped you – it's the sign of an unusual fate!"

Takhir looked like a caring elder brother who tried to cheer up the little one in a hard time. He is really seven years more than Babur. And Babur looked at Takhir like at an elder friend.

– "Fate has treated you like a stepmother treats a stepson. The cruel men gained the upper hand. Let their time pass and the time will come when you are appreciated at true value, sovereign! Now Takhir became straight, - we should leave Isfara as soon as possible. Herat is not stranger for us either. My uncle Mullah Fazliddin may live in Herat."

The mountains we should cross, - they charm you by their snow tops, sparkling in the blue sky, but how they are dangerous and dark not for you looking on them from the distant plains, but for those who must creep suffocating along the steep mountain range and precipices! So then the white snow tops will seem a shroud to man and in the cold heap of glaciers he will see the eternal habitation of the very death.

– "On the dangerous roads I entrust my life first of all to God and then to you, Takhirbek..."

Looking at back mountains-giant, touched by the sharp blade of the snow, he again remembered the spring, crushed by the collapse. Could it break through on the other side of the mountain chain – and not only the one? Behind these bulks there are the majestic Pamirs, and beyond the Pamirs – Himalayas and Gindukush.

## PART TWO VICISSITUDES OF FATE

### HERAT. MERV THE SILENCE BEFORE THE STORM

The banks and smooth surface of the transparent rivers Indjil and Hiriyrud, feeding Herat's gardens, were studded with yellow leaves; the famous vineyards and pomegranate gardens of Herat's suburbs were cast down, the rest of the summer greenery on the bare vines and branches had a sad and pitiful look.

But in this town not everything was dependent on autumn. Thousands of bluish silver pines that have been planted along the roads and the groves at the entrance to Herat from the side of Kandagar were bright and fresh as in spring.

Around the big lined reservoir – in a colloquial way it was called hauz<sup>170</sup> of Huseyn Baykara – lisonittayrs<sup>171</sup> grow here, these slender trees never shed their little narrow leaves.

Takhir heard that the leaves of the lisonittayr have a property to cure sores and cuts. Not far from the hauz he stopped his horse, dismounted from the saddle and gave the horse reins to the young novker. He began walking along the hauz intending to gather the medicinal leaves. Somebody shouted to him:

– “Hey, wait for me, bek’s horseman.”

At the thick trunk of the tree there was a man. Takhir looked intently – wasn’t it uncle Fazliddin? This man had a beard longer than his uncle had and his face was aged.

– “I am listening to you”, - having stopped, Takhir said with respect.

The man was still looking at Takhir’s face with the scar, now evidently he recognized his voice.

– “Takhir! My nephew!”

Takhir rushed to the uncle, having spread out his arms widely. Their reflections joined in the pure water of the hauz.

– “Oh, my nephew, you have brought me the smell of the motherland! Thanks Allah – you are alive and healthy!”

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<sup>170</sup> Hauz - pond

<sup>171</sup> A tree with narrow leaves, which had a healing effect and were used for wounds recovering, “lisson ut tayr” in translation means “birds tongue” for its likeness with birds tongue.

Mullah Fazliddin tore off Takhir; without setting free Takhir's palm from his, with the other one he wiped tears of happiness from his cheeks, he looked over the well-formed and strong figure of his nephew. Oho, the silver belt and expensive dagger, and the precious chakmon<sup>172</sup>, usually beks carried such things. And the iron military helmet Takhir decorated with a small silver flag, as the other beks have. Well done, Takhir!

– “Hey, nephew, now you are a real bek, the good and the great...”

– “Yes, I'm a kurchibek – the head of Babur's bodyguard.”

– “I congratulate you, congratulate you... Let the influence of bad beks escape you!”

– “That's why the sovereign has taken me as he doesn't trust many of his former beks... Well, let's stop speaking about it. How do you live, uncle mullah? I was looking for you, searching... I wanted to inquire about, to ask people, but I haven't got any acquaintances here.”

Mullah Faziliddin, who is over forty, already had a whole face in wrinkles, answered in sadness, trifling gently with his beard:

– “Yes, I still live, death doesn't take me. God bereft me of luck, my nephew. I came here, to Herat, hoping for the charity of the great Navoi, but this noble man soon left this world. But something was built without him. This year Huseyn Baykara has left us too. Every building was stopped. Architects are again without their jobs. Now I'm a bookbinder...”

– “And maybe you should meet Mirza Babur?”

– “Mirza Babur is here... And will he receive me or not? Something has passed between us.”

Takhir had heard some rumors about his uncle and Hanzoda-begim.

– “My uncle, in that case I will try to remind him of you in private? He respects architects.”

– “Well, we will discuss it a little bit later... Oh, my dear nephew! Since I have heard about Babur's coming to Herat, I was thinking: if you were among his warriors? In the street I scrutinized every one of Babur's novker... Let's go to my place! Do you need these medicinal leaves? We can find them at my house. The lisonittar grows in our garden.”

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<sup>172</sup> Chakmon - outerwear

- "In the garden? Are you alone or did you marry, uncle mullah?"
- "I married, my nephew, on Navoi's advice. He had a gardener, a good man, and the gardener had a daughter..."
- "Congratulations! And do you have children?"
- "Yes, I do. I have got a son and a daughter."
- "Oh, great! In this case I should come to your place with gifts."
- "In fact, I have seen you and that is the best gift for me, Takhirjan! So, let's go to my place!"

Takhir looked at the sky. The sun was setting down.

- "Uncle Mullah, do you live quite near?"
- "No, a little bit far from here. In mahallya Nazargoh, outskirt. Why?"
- "It's a pity... Soon I should be on service. Mirza Babur ordered so."

- "Really pity... So... Let's sit for a while here. Let me enjoy looking at you! How are you, my nephew? Did you marry?"

They sat down on the stone bench near the water. Takhir told how he had found Robiya and finished the story so:

- "Already in Kabul Robiya and I had luck to have a child. We named him Safarbek (Safar)<sup>173</sup>. All the time we were on the road, on the road..."

- "Thanks Allah! ... I totally lost the hope, Takhirjan... I thought that I wouldn't see you again. But it turned out in a different way. If the head is safe all troubles will pass and all your sorrows will be over... And what happened with Andijan's inhabitants?"

- "It's better not to ask about it, uncle Mullah! How many people Sheybani-khan killed... If I have a dream about him, I begin to rave at night, I see the bloody rivers, even though my eyes are closed..."

- "How could you manage to escape from this hell? How? Really? How did they escape from Sheybani?"

"We were going days and nights. People got tired. We were hungry. We killed and ate horses and camels. Babur gave his horse to his mother and he himself went on foot. Around there were only mountains and steep paths. There was not any refuge to have a roof over our heads."

Some little people insult Babur, they say: "There is no need to sit here too long; go on your way, cross Gissar quick". Sometimes Takhir drew a sword on them, but Babur every time persuaded him not to do

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<sup>173</sup> Safar - travel

it. He told: "You should be more restrained. They are right – who are we for them? Let's hurry up; we should cross the Amudarya as quick as possible." Takhir understood then that the sovereign was right. Just they crossed the Amudarya, had known that Sheybani attacked Gissar. The Gissar's sovereign was a coward, he decided not to fight with the khan, and escaped from his own troops. Many of his beks by the help of the secret man told Babur: "Come and we will give you Gissar!" But Mirza Babur refused it: how could they prove him their faithfulness? He said them: "If you are really on my side, if I need you, come here."

Sheybani captured Gissar; Hisrov's troops of thirty thousand soldiers were broken. Usually under such kind of disorder, caused by defeat of war, noble and strong beks to preserve also the novker's pride and not enough noble and strong to establish own dynasty, began looking for the powerful sovereign with noble name. Gissar beks turned their eyes on this important sovereign maybe because of the common reason or because of the efforts of Kasimbek, who remained devoted to Babur. Beys and Novkers began to gather at the Amudarya to join Babur. Boki-bek Chagonyani came with his four hundred soldiers anyone else. Babur received him with such honour that he didn't expect; he made him the first vizier, no less than.

Babur and two hundred forty soldiers crossed the Amudarya. In a month he had about four thousand ones...

Listening to Takhir, Mullah Fazliddin was thinking about how his nephew had changed for last years. Takhir wasn't so eloquent before. Among the noble men, for sure he had learned to use compound phrases.

– "So we arrived in Kabul", – Takhir went on. – "The sovereign of that place was a certain Mukim-bek from the tribe of Turkic Arghin. He had no complaints for the throne or simply speaking he had no power to fight with us. Our sovereign conducted negotiations in such way that finally Mukim-bek gave up Kabul without battle. Some time later we received the letter from Huseyn Baykara. Herat's sovereign admitted Babur like a sovereign of Kabul and asked him to come to the river Murgab with his troops to come out against Sheybani-khan. We wanted such a union for a long time. That's why we rode forty days and forty nights, rushed like a wind from such a distance, but Huseyn Baykara... We didn't find him alive... He hadn't luck! – Takhir added suddenly and for some reason smiled.

– “But it’s good that you arrived in Herat with stately as it becomes for strong sovereigns. Otherwise the arrogant sons of Huseyn Baykara, let Allah Merciful take his soul, would set at defiance Babur.”

– “Yes, uncle Mullah, now we are at a great honour here... The governor of the town accompanies us everywhere: in plenty we admired all sights of the town. And in the evenings we had parties at homes of nobility. Today Mirza Muzaffar accepts Mirza Babur in the White palace... Oh, uncle Mullah, look, where the sun already. I can’t be late! Can I visit you tomorrow? How can I find you?”

While they were coming to the novker who cared for Takhir’s horse, Mullah Fazliddin explained in detail how to find his house. Takhir took the reins and asked suddenly:

– “Uncle Mullah, where is your horse?”

– “I go by foot... I got used to it...”

Takhir was ashamed: his uncle had become poor and he, his nephew, felt it just now. He offered Mullah Fazliddin the silver bridle:

– “So this horse is yours.”

– “And what about you?”

– “I have two in stable. Climb up!”

He took out of his belt the lash with a silvered handle and gave it to his uncle:

– “It is the foal of that horse, uncle... Do you remember? On which you seated me in Osh and clothed me from head to foot, do you remember?”

– “Oh, my nephew, if the head is safe, the duppi<sup>174</sup> will be found. Is it worth to remind what has passed?”

“I’ll come tomorrow and make the whole family happy. I’ll dress from head to foot both the wife and children!” – Takhir has thought.

The young novker, sitting on the second horse, not understand what the meeting was, looked at uncle and nephew with surprise, having opened the mouth.

Mullah Fazliddin, having said goodbye, touched the horse. Takhir having looked after him, said to the novker quietly:

– “Are you quick-witted or no? Novker is in the saddle and the bek is on the ground.”

Young novker, having understood that he gaped, jumped off the horse.

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<sup>174</sup> Duppi -man’s head wear

Fazliddin turned and saw Takhir on the horse full of pride and staidness ("he became a bek, real bek"). The novker was going by foot with head lowered. "If only Takhir will not become like vain beks," – the architect bookbinder thought.

## II

It was already the seventeenth day of Babur's stay in the great Unsiya – the place where Alisher Navoi used to live. The high gates, blue domes, the shining in the sun multicolored ornamented mosaics resembled Samarcand madrasah of Ulugbek, but four minarets at four corners of the building were higher here than in Samarcand, and the construction was finished fifteen years before, but it looked quite new.

The personal library of Navoi occupied a lot of inner rooms.

Babur spent a lot of time looking through the books. On some pages he saw notes made by the hand of the great poet; again and again he remembered the letter once received from Mir Alisher in Samarcand: oh, how much water and blood have flowed since then!

At the door of the library on the floor there was a big clock like a narrow beautiful case. In some definite intervals the small wooden boy, on the upper surface of the case, began to move and with the gold hammer struck musical clinking. The clock was done by the order and according to the idea of Mir Alisher, its form came into fashion in Herat; the clock striking the clinking was called "Alisher's clock".

...Babur closed the library's door, looked again at the clock with clinking. He thought again: "What is a miracle? – The man died, but his invention was alive. The second life could be – doesn't the clinking of this clock tell us about it?"

The spirit of the creator of Unsiya was hovering everywhere, both in the inner rooms and in the palace. Babur was carefully opening doors which Navoi touched; he tried to walk as quietly as possible along the short corridors and ladders, feeling that he followed the invisible steps of recently living man.

In the yard, the servant swept dead leaves out of the plane trees growing around the reservoir. "Isn't our life the dead leaves, and then someone will come and sweep them out, and burn them out and the remains will be dispersed by wind?" Babur turned to the beautiful path between two rows of slender green cypresses. At the end of the path Navoi's student, Hondamir was waiting for him; he was a

historian, one of the closest companions of the great poet; Sahib Daro, the old man, with whom Navoi liked to have a heart-to-heart talk.

Sahib Daro, greeting, said:

– “My sovereign, after death of the peerless Mir Alisher, Usniya has become a body without its soul. You gave back the soul to the body!” – And bowed before Babur.

Thirty year old Hondamir with sharp penetrating eyes, smiling gently, looked at Babur: how would this twenty five year old Andijanian man respond to such praise? With the deserving modesty of age or with the appropriate habit of sovereign to accept the flattery as his due?

Babur’s heart was full of painful feelings of sadness and loss. Without wishing to look for a lofty poetic answer, Babur just said:

– “No, mavlyana<sup>175</sup>, this place of the great Mir Alisher gave my body a new soul. I could only dream of it... it was only a dream.”

Hondamir nodded with satisfaction. Sahib Daro was satisfied as well.

– “You are right my sovereign.” – He bowed again before Babur.  
– “His soul was on everything that touched the Great Spirit. Deign to look at these minarets, for example!” – The old man pointed to the right then to the left. Babur looked at it: high, shining, ornamented minarets stood in the beauty of the blue sky and white clouds.

Usually the tower crowns such minarets, from which one can call men to pray, but simply one can admire the view. Unsiya’s minarets, besides such towers, were surrounded in the middle by special circular terraces. Sahib Daro meant them.

– “The soul of Mir Alisher had repose when he looked from a height at Herat’s beauty. But in old age it’s very difficult to climb up the high tower. That’s why architects made these terraces in the middle of minarets.”

– “Could we climb up there?”

– “We will take you with pleasure... Let’s go to the west minaret...”

Sahib Daro remained at the foot of minaret, and young Babur and Hondamir climbed up the spiral stairs to the terrace quickly.

What a beauty has opened from here! In the distance there were the mountains Muhtar and Iskandja covered with snow. Below there is a river Indjil – the narrow silver blade. On the left bank there was

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<sup>175</sup> Mavlyana - title of Muslim theologians and scientists

the famous madrasah Gavharshodbegim (which was built before Navoi), on the right one, in the opposite, - no less famous madrasah Ihlosiya, built in Navoi time. Not far from it there was the hospital Shifoysi, at the same time it was the madrasah: patients were cured here and the muddaris<sup>176</sup> teaches medicine. And at some distance there was Halosiya – the building under the big dome; it was a refuge for strangers and homeless.

Herat's beauty was majestic. Navoi's idea was great!

On the other sides there were minarets and domes, like Blue Mountains. There were a lot of minarets and domes there. Babur wanted to see Samarqand again; his heart ached from love and melancholy.

– “Mavlyana”, – Babur addressed Hondamir, - “among the architects who built whole of this magnificence were there men from Maverannahr?”

– “My sovereign, do you feel that there is something similar in Herat's beauty and Samarqand?”

– “Yes, I do, that's why I asked.”

– “Many of Herat's architects studied in Samarqand. They brought in their hearts the image of Samarqand. In addition, a lot of gifted men... as you know... left Maverannahr and found refuge here, at Mir Alisher Navoi... Oh, how many qualities our peerless Mir Alisher had! But yours truly had only one of these wonderful qualities – the ability to find, to love and cherish talents. Mir Alisher told like me pupils and his close people several times: remember – vile envy and greediness are more among dull, untalented and the poor in spirit men. Especially in the high sphere of art, aimless people block the way of the gifted one. They don't give the opportunity to show their talents, they destroy. Thhe most awful malice in this world is the envy of untalented men. And the highest generosity is the generosity of people who are capable to open and create something rare and talented.

– “That's the real truth!” – Babur exclaimed.

This exclamation inspired Hondamir more strongly.

– “If we, pupils, come back from some trip or come to Mir Alisher after some days of absence, first of all he asked: “It's good that you have come back, but what rare talent have you found?” Some, whom we have found, were the teenagers of fifteen sixteen years old,

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<sup>176</sup> Muddaris - teacher in madrasah

and sometime younger. We were confused to tell about such "findings". But Mir Alisher taught: "Talent can appear in fifteen years, but a stupid man will remain stupid even in forty. Let me see him, call your slow-witted, but talented man!" Sahib Daro brought to Mir Alisher Tajik Zayniddin Vasifi – at that time he was fifteen. And this Zayniddin, taking in from the generous source of wisdom of Navoi, soon he became very famous in all Herat; he became master of muammi<sup>177</sup>... And the great artist Kamoliddin Bekhzod achieved the perfection being the pupil of Mir Alisher from the childhood... And talents of poet Hilol and calligrapher Sultan Ali Mashhadi were opened and cherished by Mir Alisher... Thanks to all these things shining before our eyes Herat became ten times more majestic and beautiful the last thirty years. Isn't it?"

– "You told the truth, mavlyana. In the whole part of the world I don't know another town greater than Herat!"

– "And didn't the talents being of common origins do Herat so wonderful and great?"

– "It's true too! Rare buildings before our eyes are the pearls coming from the treasure house of talented people's soul."

– "Mir Alisher had the greatest talent to open such treasure houses, to open talented men and put to the straight and narrow. Born under the lucky star Huseyn Baykara recognized it. You might hear my sovereign; there were a lot of selfish men sowing discord between Mir Alisher and Sultan Sohibkoran..." Hondamir's voice faltered to say it, - "great Mir Alisher was pure and reserved, Sultan Sohibkoran was depraved, being drunk he did a lot of bad things. But in the days of abstinence, when his mind was clear, he paid such compliments to Mir Alisher that everybody was amazed..."

And for sure having been reminded of some funny event, Hondamir smiled with some mysteriousness. Babur in expectation of an answer expressed high interest.

Hondamir was quite young, medium-sized, but premature fatness ruined him – it's the cause of sedentary work. He touched his frontal bone with fleshy fingers and began to tell grandly and with pleasure:

– "Mir Alisher made us happy – he finished "Hamsa" and gave this book to Sultan Huseyn for reading; as you know he was a refined connoisseur of poetry. Having read "Hamsa" our sovereign called Mir

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<sup>177</sup> Muammi - poem which hides riddle

Alisher to the palace and congratulated him in front of all. Huseyn Baykara had a very precious horse; he liked it more than others. So he orders: "The head of stables bring us a white horse!" Mir Alisher has thought with surprise: "Doesn't he want to present me with such horse?" Sultan Huseyn, having looked at Mir Alisher said: "Hence in poetry you are my teacher, and I would like to be a myurid<sup>178</sup>. Mir Alisher answered in confusion: "Sovereign, our teacher is you, and I'm your myurid." Then they brought the white horse in gold ornamentation. Huseyn Baykara asked smiling: "Should myurid do the wish of his myurid?" Of course Mir Alisher answers yes. So the first orders: "Climb up on this horse!" it is impossible to oppose Padishah's will, Mir Alisher came closer to horse. But this white horse had a bad restiveness except for the sultan it didn't allow climb anybody to him, threw off immediately. Just as Mir Alisher came up to him, the horse began to snort, turn and prance. Sultan Huseyn reeled reins on the hand and hailed the horse: "Calm!" And when the horse calmed, Mir Alisher backed the horse. The courts kept silence, - so it can begin to prance. What will be, what will be? And that was what: sultan Huseyn without releasing the reins began to walk along the palace, leading the horse. Everybody was shocked of course, and Sultan Sohibkoran said to Navoi: "For the great "Hamsa", written in our language, in Turkic, yes I'll be always the guide of your horse!" Everybody was dumbfounded; Mir Alisher was so surprised that he hardly lost consciousness: the servants had to take him off the horse... Sometimes it happened so..."

- "I think, I understood you, mavlyana", - Babur said thoughtfully after little silence. - "There, where the envious untalented men are disable to destroy talents, and with generous soul ones open them ways, - there one can achieve the top of perfection, isn't it so?"

Babur expressed exactly and clearly the dearest desires of Hondamir's soul; the historian had felt that in this Andijan sovereign he found the person who shared his views, and said cheerfully:

- "I am seduced by you, my sovereign! The peerless Mir Alisher and Sultan Sohibkoran were the great men, in their time Herat's sun was high in zenith! But having gotten the highest point, the sun begins setting down. My heart shudders of terrible premonition: Herat

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<sup>178</sup> Myurid - follower

rushes down the precipice. What should we do? How can we avoid the coming uncertainty?"

– "Hondamir foresaw that fighter troops from Maverannahr with troops of Sheybani-khan would come to Khorasan; they were coming up to Herat. Wouldn't Babur answer these poignant questions better than other ones?"

– "Your suspicion is not in vain, mavlyana." – Babur having agreed shook his head.

– "The peace in Herat reminds me of temporary silence; it sets before the terrible storm. Tashkent, when I came there last time, looked very much like today's Herat. Through thousand misfortunes, having broken out of the underworld, I reached Tashkent. When I said to my dead uncle Makhmud-khan: "In order that these misfortunes not to fall upon you, we should act together," - he laughed at me recklessly, as he was from among the grey people, untalented. He was envious enough as well. You know, how Sheybani crushed Makhmud-khan.

– "Won't it repeat in Herat, my sovereign?"

Babur didn't answer – he was still looking into the distance, turbid from the hanging dust in the air, was looking there where the sands of the desert Soki Solman spread to the northwest from Herat.

Hondamir knew that the mission of Babur in Herat was to unite the rest of Temur's roots, to make a strong union against Sheybani-khan. Talks about it were going in the palace already twenty days, in secret, of course.

Hondamir wanted to be tactful:

– "My sovereign, I don't dare to encroach on secrets of the state in order to know about what sovereigns consult with each other. But dangers are common..."

– "Mavlyana, we are alone here", – Babur interrupted the historian. – "I have no secrets from you." – He kept silence for a while and then said: – "You know that on Herat's throne there are two men at the same time – two brothers."

– "Yes, I know. By law the throne belongs to Badiuzamanu, but supporters of Hadicha-begim proclaimed Muzaffar-mirza the second ruler. We see rarely in history such situation!"

It's felt that Hondamir was dissatisfied with such course of events. Babur went on with restraint:

– “So... Each of your two shahs is matchless in hospitality, in art of conversation, in organization of great feasts. But they don't like battles and fights. I judge by my own experience. When we met with him at Murgab, something strange had happened... News had come that Sheybani broke in valley Chechektu; - it's already your land, Horasan. Khan with the main troops was on the other side of Amudarya. The Chechektu was closer to us than to khan. I said: “What if in Chechektu there are five or six hundred of enemy soldiers, so there is no need to lose the moment, let's move there quickly and catch invaders – so it won't be uncomfortable to another khan's troops to drop in Khorasan. But... Badiuzzaman-mirza wished the younger brother Muzaffar-mirza to go to Chechektu. You know that each of them has their own viziers, their servants, their troops, their military leaders. But Muzaffar-mirza had never been at war, became frightened and didn't dare to go to Chechektu, he said: “Let our elder brother go there, we will defend another borders.” And Badiuzzaman-mirza has thought so: “If I go I can die in the battle, then brother will take the throne!” – He hadn't wanted to go to Chechektu either. I couldn't stand for their long denials so I said: “If you allow me, nobles, I with my troops will go and send away enemies.” Brothers exchanged glances and evidently were ashamed of the people's justice. “You are our guest, - they said. – We would better go together to Herat”. They endowed me with hospitality, but Chechetku remained in Sheybani's hands. Isn't it strange, mavlyana?”

Hondamir sighed heavily:

– “Fortune turns away from Herat, my sovereign... What clouds are gathering over us, you know it better than the others? Mavlyana Bekhzod also thinks so. All deserved men of Herat, who take to heart the town, look at you with hope. Maybe you will manage to convince our governors how great the danger, and then with the united forces we will avert disaster.”

– “I don't know, mavlyana, don't know.” – Now Babur was looking at the floor. – “Soon I must meet your two sovereigns again.”

– “Let success be with you, my sovereign!”

– “Thank you... But I don't know, don't know...”

Walking down the minaret, Babur cast an unfriendly glance at a big inner citadel of Herat's sovereigns, built over the hills.

### III

The autumn might happen to be warm, sovereigns and the nobility close to them spent time in the country gardens.

In White garden – so was called the white marble palace in the northwest part of the town, famous from Sahibkoran Shahruh's times the palace Bogi Sofil, – Muzaffar-mirza organized a magnificent feast in honor of Babur. The most skilful cooks of Herat made kabob<sup>179</sup> from the tender saiga's meat; the tastiest dishes with smell of cumin and other seasonings were served one after another on the upper deck of palace, painted with gold patterns. Near the entrance, the sitting musicians played calmly the melodies from which the soul relaxed; and the famous singers of Herat, without raising the voice, sang something sincere, pleasantly sadness.

The feast was in high gear. The royal carver came up to Babur, having kneeled, poured out of the jug a gold glass of maynob<sup>180</sup>, the powerful and spicy, having taken the power and spice during twenty years. Babur had never drunk wine. And now – maybe because of the songs or the common mood – suddenly he wanted to empty the glass offered by the royal carver; Babur looked as usual at Kasimbek sitting next to him.

Kasimbek Kavchin, who with Babur's permission went to Gissar last year with his novker returned to his service; in Kabul he again became Babur's closest adviser. Kasimbek was religious, had never drunk the wine and tried not to allow Babur to drink strong beverage.

– “My sovereign”, – Kasimbek whispered, - “at the feast of Badiuzzaman-mirza you were offered maynob, but you didn't drink it, do you remember? If you drink now, the elder brother having known about it can take offence.”

These words made Babur feel immersed in complicated, confused matters connected with Herat's brothers. Having suppressed a desire to taste maynob and having looked at Muzaffar, Babur said:

– “My noble mirza, excuse me. I have never drunk wine!”

“Babur is afraid to drink maynob?” Muzaffar-mirza burst out of laughing indecently loudly and in a rudely familiar way.

– “My dear guest, don't in Andijan and Samarqand you taste delights given by wine? At what do you rejoice?”

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<sup>179</sup> Kabob - pieces of meat roasted on a spit

<sup>180</sup> Maynob - sort of wine

- "Oh, my mirza, such happiness we have it more than enough both in Samarqand and Andijan. But yours truly had enough other cares and... delights... The same excuse your brother Badiuzzaman-mirza accepted, he wasn't surprised that I respect shariah..."

At the mention of the name Badiuzzaman, Muzaffar became serious. Eventually he respects shariah as well! If this Andijan man doesn't want to drink we won't persuade him, - and by the gesture of the mirza, the carver passed destined to Babur glass to the vizier of Badiuzzaman-mirza to Zunnunbek Argun, invited here in order that people not think that the younger brother intends to do something against the elder one!

The merry-making was in high gear. Drunken beks came in the middle more often and began to dance. The precious modeling seemed to fall down the ceiling from the laugh evoked by famous askiyabozs<sup>181</sup> Mir Sarbarahnoy and Burhan Gungom.

Not so much time has passed from the death of Huseyn Baykara, and it would better say – quite a little, and his sons spent such a good time. And Sheybani was already at the border of Khorasan.

Kasimbek, trying to control his anger, not to give way to it, so that it wouldn't be recognized by fools and cheery fellows, whispered to Babur:

- "You can't speak to this little drunken young shah, my sovereign. And he is not free, Hadicha-begim decides everything. Let's meet his mother."

- "It's disrespectful to go away before the end of feast, isn't it?"

- "Yours truly has already arranged everything; she is looking forward to meeting you..."

When the competition of askiyabozs was finished and the laugh appeased, Babur asked the permission at Muzaffar-mirza to visit begim.

Candles lit all three decks of the enormous white marble palace. Babur, Kasimbek, Zunnubek and accompanying them bek Burunduk (close man of Muzaffar-mirza) went upstairs on the soft beautiful carpets to the very top. Thinking about the complex conversation, Babur was going and examining the refined paintings on the wall – made to the order of Shahrugh for his son Baysunkur, fascinated with art of colours and lines.

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<sup>181</sup> Askiyaboz - wisecracker

Hadicha-begim met Babur in her richest chamber. Not without intention, she seated him at some distance from her, near the table of which six legs of which were of gold (real gold!), and the polished top was decorated with insert nacres. Begim was sitting upright; she looked slim and feminine for her forty five years; behind her back on the most noticeable place there was an unusual rose bush – gold stems, emerald green leaves and roses of rubies. The gold nightingale was on the twig of rose and held in his beak the shining diamond. Small precious stones glittered in silk curtains of the door and windows.

Hadicha had a silver black dress without decorations, only her blue conical hat on the head struck eyes of those who dared to look at begim. Majestic, rich, but she was modest. The women's suite amazed at these parti-colored smart clothes, and the mistress herself showed that she followed another style and set the mind above luxury.

Babur, being taken aback a little, couldn't begin speaking, and how could he talk about difficult and secret cares of state in the presence of these dressed women. Hadicha-begim smiled condescendingly.

– "My mirza, you are our relative. And these are my daughters-in-law, interlocutors, profoundly respecting us." – And suddenly added: – "So, begin your talk, don't be shy."

– "Thank you", – Babur said constrainedly.

Candles were lit not so bright: it was difficult to distinguish the eyes and faces of the women, half-covered with thin white veil. But painted with henna, delicate hands, high breasts and slender waists in tight-fitting silks indicated that the women were young. People say that the most beautiful and tireless in love of Muzaffar-mirza's wives is Karakuz-begim; she came close to the mother-in-law, whispered something and began to laugh. Hadicha-begim began laughing also, but loudly, tossed her head and said to Babur:

– "My mirza, Herat's beauties from noble and sovereign's families stare at you. But such a courageous shah, such a handsome fellow, such a talented poet lives without harem, alone. Is it true?"

Babur turned red, looked away: what does he have to do with his harem, his single life, she knows everything and asks.

– "Noble begim, it is true." – He added overcoming the uncomfortable situation: – "So obviously, it was prescribed me by fate."

– “Hey mirza, now the fate will favour you, I think. If you remain in Herat you will become the brother to Muzaffar-mirza. Both you and he are from Temur’s origins. In Herat we will find you beautiful and clever women worthy of you. We will marry you... we will do such a wonderful toy<sup>182</sup>.”

There was something serious in these playful tricks, something serious. Babur understood easily what a trap the sly and careful Hadicha set him by these naïve words. To become the brother of Muzaffar-mirza means to become only his supporter. Once Hadicha inspired the killers of mirza Mumin, the grandson of Sultan Huseyn. Now she thinks about to free from Badiuzzaman so that his son will be the unique holder of Herat’s throne. If Babur becomes the brother of Muzaffar, he will be the one, who will be able to help Hadicha to realize her plans.

– “Thanks for your care, my noble”, – Babur said with humility. “But all of us have another obstacle...”

– “What kind of obstacle, my mirza?”

– “Excuse me, but the talk about it is not for tender women’s ears... excuse me...”

Babur lowered his head. Hadicha became straighter, moved her eyes. The women bowing gravely withdrew.

Thereafter Babur began to talk about another, non marriage matter – “the attack of Sheybani-khan is inevitable, and now we shouldn’t think about toys, weddings and feasts, we should prepare for the fight to the death.”

– “Sheybani captured the enormous territories from Andijan to Horezm, from Merv to Turkestan; he gathered uncountable quantity of troops. I know how he prepares for every war thoroughly. And when he directs his troops in battles, even more the brave and skillful can’t resist. I saw it with my own eyes!”

Babur gave more new arguments, proved the military power and cruelty of Sheybani. Finally Hadicha-begim lost her patience:

– “How could we avoid this misfortune, tell me please, my mirza?”

– “There is one way – to unite those who come from Timur’s origins, to unite everybody! Everywhere we rule, we should gather the troops and teach them to get the unite army of fifty-sixty thousands of

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<sup>182</sup> A wedding party

soldiers. To teach them the whole winter and with united beginning to fight battle!"

– "And who should be this "the united beginning"? – Hadicha thought.

Kasimbek looked quickly at Babur. It was clear for him that the best leader of this army could be only Babur. And Babur himself knew it and he wanted it. And it's known from olden times who has army so has the power. He wouldn't be given the united army and Hadicha wouldn't allow anybody except her son to occupy a throne.

Babur, to mollify her, could say: "Let Muzaffar-mirza be a leader!" (and he will be the main advisor), but here in Hadicha's room there was Zunnubek – the vizier of the second shah Badiuzzaman. The discord between brothers had already gone so far.

– "Crown-bearing brothers should choose who will be the "united beginning", which I am speaking about. We should finish feasting, begin; we should concentrate all attention on the defense of the town. Every day is dear to us, my noble."

Hadich-begim asked Herat's beks – what did they think about it?

Zunnubek knitted his bushy brows, because of it they erected, and looked at Babur:

– "The fact that our guest, noble mirza, warned us about intrigues of Sheybani-khan and his power, it's good. But I am sure: Sheybani-khan's sword, turned out the victorious, will be broken in Khorasan, if he comes here. I repeat, I am sure of it, my sovereign, so I guess there is no reason for the needless anxieties and fear."

It was noticed that Hadicha-begim liked these Zunnubek's words.

– "Let your prophecy about broken Sheybani's sword come true. But is there a reason for such opinion?" – Babur asked, still being surprised at the boundless naivety and human self-importance.

– "I don't think so, mirza, the most respected Herat's prophets and holy sheiks think so."

Zunnubek looked pleadingly at Hadicha-begim. The woman, smiling explained:

– "My dear guests, Herat has a famous prophet Kutb. Till now everything came true that Kutb predicted. Since respectable Zunnubek became the vizier, Kutb had a dream that it would be he, Zunnubek, who would break Sheybani's sword. Our respectful astrologers confirmed this prophecy according to the stars. Hadicha

was smiling so wide that it seemed to Babur that she laughed openly at the "wise" vizier. After our sheikhs hung on Zunnubek's shoulder the consecrated ribbon, and now everybody began to add to his name the word hizabrulla."

'Hizabrulla' – in Arabic "the tiger of Allah", "the lion of Allah", which means "unconquerable", "always win". Babur knew well the play of many meanings in Arabic words. Oh, how deceptive the sound of Arabic nicknames – additions to titles! Babur could keep a mockery.

– "Oh, who will dare to doubt that respectable Zunnubek is a real hizabrulla! And noble begin well-mentioned holy mullah and wise prophets. I remembered those days when in Saripul I moved alone on Sheybani. Here is the respectable Kasimbek, he was there either, can confirm it,- saints and astrologers, experts of heavenly signs were telling us that time: "Above your shoulder there is a fortunate combination of eight stars, if tomorrow you go into battle, the victory will be yours, no doubt." Unfortunately they didn't give us such a nickname hizabrulla, we without it believed and without waiting reinforcement, we went into a field... We lost the battle because we were alone", – Babur said without irony. – "And still reap the fruits of our mistake."

Hadicha-begim's face clouded over, she pressed her lips. Zunnunbek objected:

– "Mirza, prophets of Herat don't look like astrologers of Samarqand. In such great town like Herat nobody will repeat the mistake made in Saripul!"

"He is just a fool man", – Babur had thought.

Burunduk tried to calm the irritated vizier:

– "Respectful Zunnunbek, our high guest came here from such a distance like Kabul, wishing good. Our situation is really in danger and we should think about the resistance to Sheybani-khan and shouldn't put it aside."

Hadicha-begim decided to be on nobody's side, and gently to convince everybody:

– "Respectful Zunnubek, you should understand that there is no reason to give up unconcern. But our Burundubek shouldn't forget: the man having suffered many defeats is disposed to exaggerate the danger. Our dear guest apart from his wishes does so. .. My mirza, don't worry to excess: if Sheybani will dare to encroach on Herat, it will be disastrous for himself!"

– “I wonder that Hadicha-begim having seen so much in her life, believes flattering predictions of sheiks”, – Babur said to Badiuzzaman the next day.

Mirza Badiuzzaman, resembling his father Huseyn Baykara, by posture and screwed-up eyes, smiled:

– “Don’t wonder. It goes without saying the woman always remains the woman: long hair, but little intellect.”

– “But this shortsightedness could cause a big trouble...”

– “What can we do? My loved son Mirza Muhammad is dead because of her wily temper!”

– “Oh, sovereign, forget about this painful mistake, - people say that your father was out of his mind of drunkenness!”

– “I can’t forget it, I can’t... My late father isn’t guilty! Sultan Sohibkoran loved grandson very much, knew his poems by heart... In the begining my father loved me as well. I, exactly I, was the successor of the throne. Hadicha-begim looked for ways to quarrel us. And when mirza Mumin fought with her son and unfortunately with my blood brother Muzaffar-mirza, he was taken prisoner... to uncle, not to stranger!... this way was found... she killed him by order of drunken shah; thereby she made me and my father like unappeasable enemies. After the son of Hadicha-begim, my blood brother Muzaffar-mirza became the successor of the throne. Instead of me! Today’s situation was also made by this insidious woman! I know: begim takes me in consideration temporarily; she waits for the occasion to kill me and to make her son the unique shah of Herat Muzaffar-mirza!”

Babur decided to remind Badiuzzamanu of Sheybani; he asked if there was news about him.

– “Khan captured Khorezm and came back to Samarqand.”

– “So, now it’s the turn of Khorasan. Khan will come here”, – Babur said with confidence.

– “Right now? Won’t he take a rest for a year or two after Khorezm?”

Yes, Herat’s co-sovereign doesn’t know everything in details; evidently he has no spies among the enemies. Co-sovereigns watched over each other. What is for them Sheybani-khan, the deadly enemy of Temur’s descendants. Babur without stopping to wonder this blindness, once more tried to convince Badiuzzaman:

– “Sovereign, I know it from my own experience how much Sheybani-khan is prudent and insidious. I have no doubt that the

secret khan's people are in Herat in the likeness of dervishes or merchants, and they send to Samarqand necessary information."

Badiuzzaman felt Babur's unsaid reproach. He made a joke in reply:

– "Hey, my mirza, maybe your secret people got more fresh information from Samarqand?"

– "I respect you like a father. I, your guest, know at my own experience how Sheybani can use unconcern of his enemies. He isn't waited, but he having left tired of the trip troops in the captured area, sets off for a new one with troops which had rest. And the unexpected has no time to gather up. All Sheybani's power is in that he fights having united all brothers, all relatives, capable to help him in any way. In front of such a dangerous enemy, we, Timur's descendants must forget our discords. If we don't unite either, don't prepare for the war under the beginning of one leader, we will get into trouble!"

– "Under the beginning of one leader, you said? And who will he become, amirzoda?"

Now Babur understood – each of the brothers says to himself: "If I don't have, he won't have either!" let the state, for which they quarrel, go not to them and their cousin Babur, but to some stranger, if the fortune wants so.

– "Won't you go to battle separately?" – asked Babur.

– "Is there another way? Each of us has our own troops. I don't believe Muzaffar-mirza. But with I am ready to go in any battle. My high guest, remain in Herat! Be my leader. We will do everything that you need."

Only in this they are alike: each of them would like that experience in military affairs Babur with his beks and Novkers to remain in Herat, and when the dangerous hour comes, he will go just with him, not with the brother to fight against Sheybani.

Babur imagined the dual power of sons of Huseyn Baykara like a ship with holed bottom. What for must he remain on such a doomed ship?

## IV

At last Mullah<sup>183</sup> Fazliddin pulled himself together and came to Babur to Unsiya. The degree of everyday fuss usually fell down after

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<sup>183</sup> Mullah – a male religious teacher or leader

the midday namaz<sup>184</sup>, but this time the vanity was felt in Unsiya. The Novkers<sup>185</sup> and servants were preparing for a long journey.

Takhir who was preoccupied and businesslike met his uncle in a covered walkway:

- "Oh, thank Allah, you came yourself uncle mullah!"
  - "What's the matter, what is happening here, nephew?"
  - "I can tell you: tomorrow in the morning we are leaving Herat."
  - "Are you going to Kabul?"
  - "Yes, we are. But brother-shahs do not need to know about it."
- Takhir began talking in a whisper. - "For them we are going... to pass the winter outside the city."

Fazliddin seemed suddenly wilted and complained with a sign:

- "It means that you leave us defenseless orphans again..."
- "As soon as the winter ends you can move to Kabul as well.

Because last time as you met mirza<sup>186</sup> Babur, he himself invited you to his place."

- "Is it easy to move, nephew? A month or even forty days of journey. Besides I'm a family man..."

Sad Fazliddin went to Babur. A guardsman stood at the fretted gold-filled door of a vast audience chamber which once was Navoi's chamber. He was evidently warned about mavlyana's<sup>187</sup> arrival. The door flew immediately opened in front of Fazliddin.

Mavlyana recognized at once the people who were sitting in the back of the chamber talking to Babur. One of them was the poet Muhammad Sultan, a man about forty-five, beardless: he often used to talk to Navoi. Sultan Ali Mashhadi sat a little bit closer, cross-legged. He was an excellent calligrapher. Kamoliddin Bekhzod and Khondamir sat to the right of Babur's hand.

Babur rose up from the kurpacha<sup>188</sup>, and greeted the entered man. The others rose up from their places as well. The architect was going to find him the modest place of the semicircle but Khondamir, who was the youngest here, not including Babur, said:

- "You are the countryman of our great guest-sovereign", - and made him sit down between himself and Bekhzod, closer to Babur.

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<sup>184</sup> Namaz – obligatory prayers of Muslims performed five times in a day

<sup>185</sup> Nookers – men-at-arms who are in feudal nobility's service

<sup>186</sup> Mirza – the title of honor, prefixed to the surname of an individual

<sup>187</sup> Mavlyana – word-for-word – our master; the title of Muslim theologians and scholars

<sup>188</sup> Kurpacha – a traditional cushion surrounding a low little table

And the same Khondamir going on the speech which had been interrupted by the arrival of the architect began talking:

– “What a change of destiny! My sovereign, you admire the flourishing of the art in Herat, its wonderful talents. And we grieve that there is no such an enlightened and talented shah as you in Herat now!”

Babur didn’t want the dignity of brothers with whom he shared his power to be hurt, - after all it were they who received him a great ceremonial:

– “Mavlyana, I believe there are enlightened rulers in Herat still now.”

The mocking smile played on Bekhzod’s thin sketched slight face with a short curly small beard which suited the painter:

– “Yes, my sovereign, there is a lot of light if not enlightenment now in Herat.” – The painter raised his look at Babur. – “Do you know why? If one of our sovereigns is the sun, another one is the moon. A poem of such content was spread among the people of Herat: Husayn Bayqaro was the true shah; he triumphed in real battles. His sons sit on two thrones. “I am the moon”, – one of them says, “I am the sun”, - announces the other, - they compete with each other round the clock. Their mutual struggle resembles the struggle of two checks on the playing board, they are not the real shahs in the example of their father; they are nothing but chess pieces...”

Babur burst out laughing involuntarily:

– “The brothers’ feud really resembles chess!”

– “The trouble is”, – Khondamir didn’t even smile, - “and they lose Khorasan in this game! And it’s impossible to make him understand it.”

Muhammad Sultan’s eyes flashed rebelliously:

– “It’s impossible to make them understand – not by the help of words but by the help of saber!”

Hondamir cast an anxious glance at the door. The confidant’s of the sovereigns of Herat once spied skillfully Navoi; they could overhear Babur now.

So as to take away the conversation from the dangerous path, Sultan Ali Mashkhadi took out the roll of paper from the leather bag which was with him.

– “Your obedient servant has brought some recopied ghazals<sup>189</sup> of the eminent guest.”

Silky-smooth sheets of paper passed through their hands. The penman was really skillful: the delicate outlines of the letters were full of trembling and elegance. Khondamir glanced over the lines of the first ghazal.

– “Oh! Look!” – he exclaimed with amazement. – “How simple and beautiful it is! Many poets deify the sweetheart, endow her with some supernatural characters: she is a fabulous peri<sup>190</sup> and saviour of the soul, and redeemer from heart sorrows. Our mirza turns down this pestered sugariness of exaggerations!”

*In this world, Babur, you haven't found friend of your soul besides yourself.*

*Get used to yourself, to such kind of your life – you haven't found true love.*

*Henceforth confide your secrets only to yourself, only to yourself...*

*You've walked around the whole world but you haven't got your sweetheart.*

*There is no woman for your soul, you haven't found her!*

– “They are courageous words!” – Bekhzod looked admiringly at Babur. – “You are right a thousand times, sovereign! A man should trust only in himself, should rely only on himself.”

The poet Muhammad Sultan liked the couplet from another poem. He read with a hot feeling:

*There is no other man being like me – loving, faithful to my sweetheart!*

*There is no other woman being so loved, who is compassionated to my sufferings.*

Fazliddin sighed and said quietly:

– “This couplet expressed my pain as well...”

These praises embarrassed Babur.

– “My friends! I thanked God that I've met and had a talk with such experts of poetry as you, - his voice strained unnaturally. – “These lines which I inscribed anyhow in black and white are to your liking not because of me but thanks to the incomparable art of mavlyana Mashkhadi, a real master of calligraphy. If you allow I'll give

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<sup>189</sup> Ghazal – a poetic form in the oriental poetry

<sup>190</sup> A fairy-tale beauty

to all of you as a keepsake an individual and rewritten especially page with my ghazals."

– "You give us presents as a real shah!" – Khondamir couldn't keep his pleasure.

And Khondamir and Bekhzod and Muhammad Sultan – each one having accepted the present put the sheet of paper to the eyes as if it was a dear and holy thing in token of respect to the poet and penman. Having outretched the last sheet of paper to Fazliddin:

– "Mavlyana, we are not only compatriots but we are sick of the same pain."

Mavlyana Fazliddin accepted the ghazal put the sheet of paper to his eyes and answered sincerely and excitedly:

– "I believe that soon this ghazal written in Herat will reach Samarcand and Andijan. May the Lord help my sovereign and all of us living far from our motherland reach it following these ghazals!"

– "I wish your words were true, mavlyana!"

Babur called Kasimbek and he put a brocade chapan<sup>191</sup> with gold buttons on Sultan Ali Mashkhadi.

– "My sovereign", – Khondamir said. "Let our great and noble thoughts come true. I wish you were inspired by Mir Alisher's great spirit."

Everybody joined this wish and passed prayerfully their palms over their faces.

When all of them had said goodbye, he detained the architect for an instant:

– "Maybe next year I'll see you in Kabul, mavlyana? – We don't have a possibility to build such big buildings, it's true. Kabul looks like outskirts now in comparison with Herat. But we set hopes upon god, fortune smiles also us..."

– "I accept your invitation with gratitude!" – Mullah Fazliddin bowed.

The sun was rising when Babur passed through one of the out-of-town street framed with rich gardens of Herat with his retinue. Seldom one could see the palaces with cupolas in glazed tile in the verdure behind brick walls, often one could see houses-country estates for summer holidays of the nobility of Herat. Suddenly somebody threw a small bouquet of roses over a big wall. A reddish flower fell exactly on the mane of the dun horse on which Babur was

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<sup>191</sup> Chapan – man's quilted coat

sitting and caught with its thorns. Babur raised his head and saw a pretty face of a young girl with eyebrows in opposite directions in a brightly colored cone-shaped hat pulled low flash above the wall. Babur bent to the neck of the horse pulled carefully the flower out of its rich mane, and brought it to his lips...

It was late autumn; in the distance on the tops of the mountain ridge Zandgirkokh snow laid already for a long time. But the rose smelt so well! Wasn't it a miracle - its blossoming at this period? Babur stopped the horse by the movement of reins, rested against stirrups raised himself a little in the saddle and stretching his neck looked at the top of the wall. And the girl's face appeared again; he made out that she had black eyes and they were so vivid and sparkling!

He had to pass this street before. The girl must have seen him earlier. Now she blinked her long eyelashes, her face flushed and disappeared, in a minute it appeared again being embarrassed and even much prettier because of this embarrassment. Did she greet him or say good bye? How old was she - she may be eighteen not more. What a charming girl she is!

Babur stood beside the wall not knowing what to do, - while the other horsemen stopped the horses noticing the girl. There was good-natured Yusuf Alibek the governor of the town among those who escorted Babur. It was he who recognized the girl and said smiling surprisingly:

- "Oh-oh, Mokhim, our sweetie, what a big girl she is!"

It seems like the girl came round - she turned red even more stung Babur with her glance and disappeared - without return this time.

Babur got red in his face; because of inside heat his eyes were sparkling he came down hastily on Yusuf Alibek:

- "Who? Who is she? Tell me - who? Whose?"

- "My mirza, this homestead belongs to the distant relative of Sultan Huseyn. The father of this girl was one of the close people of Huseyn Bayqarah. We used to go to each other as well."

- "Are they still alive?"

- "They are alive, but... they are dismissed from affairs of the state."

- "What for?"

- "I don't know, but... brother-shahs don't treat him very well... So it seems to me. As far as I know he is going to leave Herat and go either to Kandagar or to Gazni..."

Babur moved away from the girl whose name was Mokhim further and further. He thought about it with sharp regret twirled like the wind. He had been to Herat for twenty days and met Mokhim only today before his leaving.

Babur looked at the flower which he was still holding in his hand. It seemed that the hand brought it itself to his lips and then to the silk turban which was wound on the head; it looked like the thin and strong stem found there a place by itself. A red tiny spot on white looks beautifully and doesn't glare.

## V

The winter passed with no worry in Herat. In the middle of the spring Shaybani Khan crossed the Morghab River with his five thousand army and invaded the limits of Khorasan. By then Badiuzzaman-mirza and Muzaffar-mirza, everyone with his own army and with his military leader, were inactive in the north from Herat in Kora-Rabad and Tarnob.

Shaybani Khan's cavalry led by Ubaydulla Sultan and Timur Sultan stuck like a pike into the middle of the position of the army of Herat. Badiuzzaman and his brother with the majority of their beys ran as fast as they could. Only Zunnunbek Argun, Khizaburulla believing that they were destined to break down Shaybani Khan's army, came to meet Ubaydulla with a thousand of his soldiers and it must be admitted that he fought courageously to his last breath. But very soon Ubaydulla Sultan gave the best of the battle. During the battle Zunnunbek was thrown down from the saddle: his offcut head was brought among other trophies to Shaybani Khan's headquarters and flung to the hoofs of the khan's horse.

Badiuzzaman was the first who arrived at a gallop in Herat from the battle field but he didn't come into the town. He stayed in a suburban garden for some hours, breathed the horses and then stuffed them with gold, silver and precious stones. His wives and children waited for him in the local fortress – ark. But Badiuzzaman-mirza, being frightened by enemies, didn't even come to fetch his family. He ordered to close the gates of Herat let the siege be, he

would return soon with reinforcement. And he ran to the south, to Kandagar.

Muzaffar Mirza arrived in Herat at night and acted the same way as his brother. The difference was that he stayed in the other suburban garden – not in Bogi Djakhanoro but in Bogi Safid. He recovered his breath. Like Badiuzzaman he loaded himself with riches. And he didn't call at ark. In the same words he ordered to close the inside gates of fortification of Herat and hold up till his return. Then he ran away to the west, to Astrabad.

Shaybani Khan, having gained a victory more easily than he had expected started moving to Herat. He set up marquees in fifteen versts to the east from the town on the green flat Kakhdistan which was known for its wonderful air. Sheikh ul-Islam<sup>192</sup> of Herat aged Taftazani with other eminent people decided not to torment themselves in a hopeless siege and brought the keys of the town together with gorgeous gifts to the khan-conqueror.

Shaybani Khan, being intoxicated by his one more victory, was in a state of bliss in the open air of spring-gracious Kakhdistan. And he craved for the embrace of a new beauty. The rumors about Karakuz-begim<sup>193</sup> resounded more than about others – it was she, Muzaffar-mirza's beloved wife, who was the most beautiful woman among the beauties of Herat. Khan knew perfectly well how beautiful were the women in Tashkent and Andijan who were called Karakuz-begim. And what is it about the dark-eyed woman of Herat?

Oh, warrior of faith, caliph<sup>194</sup> and imam<sup>195</sup> Shaybani Khan didn't want to use violence, Allah forbid! Being true to his habit he wrote a short ghazal about his correspondence infatuation with a twenty-year-old begim; khan's mediator poet Mukhammad Sultan gave the poem to the beauty. Karakuz-begim, being infuriated to the utmost at Muzaffar-mirza for his faint-heartedness, accepted khan's ghazal quite favorably. Khadicha-begim's other daughters-in-law and Khadicha begim locked themselves up in Ihtiyaraddin which was the most stable citadel of Herat. But Karakuz separated from them and went to her father's country estate. Begim was bathed in the bath, dressed up

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<sup>192</sup> Sheikh ul-Islam – a title of superior authority in the issues of Islam

<sup>193</sup> Begim – my lady

<sup>194</sup> Caliph – the head of the state

<sup>195</sup> Imam – the worship leader of a mosque and the Muslim community

as a bride and taken to Kakhdistan in a splendid carriage which was sent by the khan.

Late in the day Sheikh Ul-Islam and the arbiter of Herat were called to Shaybani's headquarters.

Khan, who looked younger than usual, today received the experts of the Shariat<sup>196</sup> of Herat in the room covered with a huge silk carpet; the patterns interlaced with the lines of godly poems. Mullah Abdurakhim said to the people of Herat that the wedding of the Great Khan with Karakuz-begim was planned for that day.

- "For today?" - Sheikh ul-Islam cast a perplexed glance at the arbiter.

Karakuz-begim was still Muzaffar-mirza's legal wife. Five days even didn't pass since her husband had left her. And it's known quite well by the Shariat that a woman being a Muslim's wife doesn't have a right to marry any other man until three months pass after divorce. This duty of the Shariat is very strict!

Sheikh ul-Islam prostrated himself and kissed the carpet where the khan stood, but he had just began talking about this duty when the khan interrupted him:

- "Don't teach us the Shariat! Begim's womanlike husband gave her three-repeated divorce four months ago. And you tell me about three months. Begim divorced four months ago! Aren't you versed in everything really know about it?!"

The horror by khan's anger made Sheikh ul-Islam prostrate himself again. Getting tangled in his white beard he kissed the carpet again:

- "We know, Great Khan!"
- "We know!" - said the judge kissing the carpet.

They really knew that four months ago Muzaffar-mirza being in anger on his wife screamed out recklessly three-repeated divorce. But in three months he made peace with Karakuz and then Sheikh Ul-Islam and judge blessed the spouses' reconciliation by their prayers. But it was equivalent to death to tell about it to khan flown into passion, seized by jealousy because the name of Begim's young man was mentioned in his presence!

The experts of the Shariat began preparing hastily to sanctify by prayers the lawful wedlock of khan and Karakuz-begim.

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<sup>196</sup> Shariat – the body of doctrines that regulate the lives of those who profess Islam

Shaybani Khan decorated his turban with rubies and a fluffy feather of the eagle-owl. He went to begin's bedroom with an energetic and proud step. An old custodian of the harem, two old castrate slaves and two bondwomen taken by Karakuz-begin kept awake in the anteroom which was remote from the bedroom in the way nothing would be heard except a loud sovereign's appeal in case of necessity.

At midnight the doors of the bedroom were opened with a crash – Shaybani Khan appeared in the anteroom in an opened dressing gown and in a light white skullcap. He was pale and angry, his lips were trembling.

– “It turned out that she is... depraved! Impudent, shameless!”

The custodian of the harem with bondwomen rushed to the bedroom. Beautiful Karakuz was sitting on the edge of the unwrapped bed. She closed her face with her hands and cried in a constrained voice shuddering with her shoulders.

What has happened? In a love excitement Karakuz-begin allowed herself some kind of game with the hips like an Egyptian dance. This game was called “galvira” – “a percolator” among noble women. “Oh, I am foolish”, - sobbed Karakuz, – “I wanted to please khan”. Fifty five years – isn’t a joke! A woman should inspire her man on a love feat. But it turned out that khan didn’t require it. He married many times, lost count of women and girls with whom he shared his bed but he didn’t even suspect of such kind of things. At first he was taken aback, then he remembered Karakuz-begin’s young husband, faint-hearted Muzaffar, imagined them together giving themselves up to galvira, - and he suddenly lost his masculine power. He jumped out of bed swearing furiously.

The bondwomen confirmed to the custodian of the harem that there was nothing to be ashamed of in that prank that it was rather popular among the noble women of Herat and that poor begin wanted to please khan more. The custodian was inspired with compassion to the young wife and recounted everything to khan trying to cool his anger:

– “Oh, sovereign, the young begin is not as guilty as those who taught her these indecencies! Herat is a den of depravity!”

“This city is a nest of the Rafidah<sup>197</sup> betrayers of faith!” – The khan decided to wreak his anger on other person. Khadicha-begin –

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<sup>197</sup> Rafidah – a sect in Islam; the members of a sect went over from the Sunni to the Shia

she is the main libertine of Herat! First of all she must be punished in public.

Shaybani didn't call at the bedroom. Having ordered the custodian of the harem and eunuchs to return Karakuz-begim on the decency way he retreated hastily in another room of the palace; however he didn't have a wink of sleep till dawn.

In the morning he called the commander Ubaydulla Sultan, Mansur-bakhshi<sup>198</sup>, palace poets Muhammad Salih and mullah Binoyi to his marquee.

First of all he made questioning to his nephew Ubaydulla Sultan. He asked severely:

– “Is the fortress Ikhtiyarddin captured?”

– ?Great khan, we will capture it soon!”

– “I have given you such a big army and you can't capture the fortress where a libertine locked herself up? Or must I do it myself?”

Everybody understood that something had happened to the khan at night. Twenty-year-old tall Ubaydulla Sultan bent half-and-half in an awkward bow:

– “Great khan, I'll capture the fortress this very day! I'll assault right now!”

– “You'll assault!” – Shaybani mimicked him. – “Your army has already trampled down all the crops. We didn't arrive in Herat as guests! The harvest will be useful for us! We must take care of our gardens and protect them against damage! You yourself will eat the fruit!” – He cried even louder without any connection: – “We must destroy Timur's offsprings in the nip! And crush the Shia of Khorasan betrayals of the true faith!”

– “We will execute everything that was said, sovereign!”

Letting Ubaydulla Sultan go, Shaybani said:

– “If you are going to capture the ark today, take Mansur-bakhshi with you! He is a poor man; he is a single man again. Women can't stand his power but they say that Khadicha-begim is thirsting for such a giant. After capturing the fortress, give the mistress to Mansur-bakhshi as a consolation for both of them.”

Mansur-bakhshi (he became fat even more, became looking like a round yurta<sup>199</sup>) bowed down:

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<sup>198</sup> Bakhshi – a teacher

<sup>199</sup> A round tent

– “I’m your victim, great khan. You said truly: since my Zukhra-begim from Samarqand died I don’t live -I am tormented by loneliness!”

– “But you, bakhshi, don’t think only about your profit! The greatest riches of Herat belong to Khadicha-begim. For example, I know that a gold flower was made by her order. Its stems are made of forged gold and the leaves are emeralds. A nightingale sits on this flower. It’s made of gold as well. It holds a large diamond in his beak.”

– “Great khan, you can consider this thing will be yours!” – Mansur-bakhshi hit himself with a fist into the chest. – “And begim’s money is yours as well! She will be enough for me!”

Shaybani Khan’s face lit up from the jokes of the lustful man. Having become high-spirited, he allowed Ubaydulla Sultan and Mansur-bakhshi to go away.

But Mukhammad Salih and Mullah Binoyi were still standing in front of the khan in respectful silence. The khan was sitting in silence on the brocaded reddish quilt, as well crossed his legs. Then he smiled and said angrily to Mukhammad Salih:

– “You, poet, praised continually Herat. And your Herat turned out to be a nest of impious and depraved people who lost their shame and conscience!”

Mukhammad Salih suspected what kind of ordeal the khan had to endure that night. Shaybani was angry at his masculine sickness and tried to wreak his anger on others. Who wants to rub salt into the sovereign’s wound? Allah forbids! And the poet began talking about the other things:

– “Great caliph! Timur’s despicable offspring drove Herat into an abyss of immorality. But you... oh, you have overthrown them in the battle and precipitate their spirit – by your devotion and purity which will certainly become a light torch illuminating the true way of life for the people of Herat.”

– “You are cunning in words! But why don’t you say that morality of the people of Herat spoiled the poets as well! Weren’t there among you those who glorified Timur’s generation in shameful poems and who received a lot of gold in reward?”

– “There were, omniscient sovereign, there were... Such kind of poets exiled Mavlyana Binoyi from Herat!”

Shaybani Khan looked at Binoyi:

– “Is it true?”

– “Yes, it is, sovereign!” – Binoyi bowed with restraint as it seemed to the khan.

– “In that case”, – he raised his voice, - “let mavlyana put a sword of justice and pious revenge on the waist! Mavlyana, take a hundred of our soldiers at your disposal. I wish musodara<sup>200</sup> happened! We will take the property of those poets who were praised and given themselves air, those furious for gold, Timur’s offsprings! Take away all their gold and return it to treasury! Maybe after it they will recover their eyes and it will be easier for them to return on the way of moral purification!”

Mavlyana Binoyi was taken aback. Other poets of Herat hurt him once and he didn’t deny they were not dear to him, but he didn’t want to conduct a search in their houses, being accompanied by the soldiers at all. This case was not for him; it was not according his conscience. But how could he tell about his unwillingness to the khan?

Mulla Binoyi was a timid person but he didn’t lack in character.

– “Oh, great khan, I thank you for such a great confidence! But, but, I’m afraid...”

– “What?”

– “I won’t manage with it, sovereign! I never held a saber in my hand. I’m already over fifty... I think a bellicose and hot gentleman Muhammad Salih will carry out this your royal order a hundred times better than your most humble servant! But I’m ready to help him as much as my forces will suffice! But Muhammad Salih didn’t have a burning desire to be involved in a thankless task and he had finesse in abundance.”

– “Mavlyana, I would accept gladly so important and fair order of our sovereign from you, but there is a problem – I don’t know the poets of Herat as well as you know!”

Shaybani khan stopped this “poetic” wrangling by a peremptory shout and his eyes flashed with anger:

– “Hey, Mavlyana Binoyi, think about your behavior! Who fed you and gave you drink during these six years? We presented you a horse – you accepted it! We presented you a caftan – you put it on. We gave you house and money – you didn’t refuse them. And when we came close to a godly affair – you refuse?!”

The khan was in a fury. Mavlyana Binoyi felt that if he said a word across – Shaybani would call the executor and order to kill the

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<sup>200</sup> Musodara - immobilization

ungrateful man. This “godly” commission should be accepted with a bow...

And soon the people of Herat began talking to each other that the famous poet Binoyi went from house to house with armed soldiers that turned everything upside down there in search of gold, and having found, they were robbing these houses, enriching Shaybani’s treasure and not forgetting about themselves.

Shaybani Khan’s right hand, his sixty five-year-old vizier Mullah Abdurakhim found another way of “tearing away” the gold from the scientific fraternity of Herat. Flocks of sheep were among the plunder got into the winner’s hands in the neighborhood of Herat. Mullah Abdurakhim ordered to bring sixty sheep from each flock to the bazaar beyond Kipchaks gates of Herat. Then he sent a little detachment of soldiers who gathered there dozens of poets and scientists and made them arrive at the same bazaar. Among others there was Khomdamir, a historian who became famous during the Timurids’ governing, mavlyana Fazliddin known for his close relations with Babur, poet Sultan Mukhammad who composed poems in honor of Husayn Bayqarah. Mullah Abdurakhim himself drove into the bazaar on a fast argamak<sup>201</sup>. One of his confidants spoke to Khondamir and others:

– “Great vizier, Mullah Nizamiddin Abdurakhim wants to sell these sheep only to you!”

Khondamir exchanged glances with his companions (Oh, if only it finishes with it!) then bowed to the vizier and answered on behalf of all gathered:

– “We’ll buy them; we’ll buy them with all our heart and soul. Tell us the price.”

The confidant said in a stately manner:

– “These sheep are consecrated by great vizier’s breath. He approached them not once. It means that they are sacred. But you are the people corrupted by service at the Timurid’s breed; you live a desecrated obscene life. We hope that eating their meat you will clear yourself. That’s why each of these sheep costs six hundred dinars!”

One could buy not one but ten sheep for six hundred dinars. But not to buy them at the price fixed by the vizier meant to undergo a cruel punishment.

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<sup>201</sup> Argamak – Central Asian breed of saddle-horse

Mullah Fazliddin, being in strained circumstances, tried to appeal for violator's conscience:

– “Merciful, we've paid off a general tax and taxation on the victors' needs recently...”

The poet Muhammad Sultan smiled ironically:

– “Eh, mavlyana, it was said to you that they are rare sheep and they were displayed much kindness from the looks of the sacred eyes of the great vizier! That which is holly costs ten times more.”

Mullah Abdurakhim caught a slight irony in these words, became angry and ordered the soldiers:

– “Give each of them a dozen sheep!.. Arrogant! They became too choosy! They became conceited in pride and wealth... We must make them come down to earth... They will drive them at home themselves, nobody must help them! And you must accompany them and recover money from them. If they don't fulfill the order, confiscation waits them and they must be sent to zindan<sup>202</sup>!”

Ubaydulla Sultan's one and a half thousand soldiers had been sticking around the fortress Ikhtiyarddin for ten days. But they couldn't capture this citadel – arrows didn't reach the top of the walls let alone the staircase. They tried to shoot at ferrous gates from guns – but they failed completely. Then they started to dig saps...

And a beneficial slack spread in Herat (they plundered everything they could, quickly and skillfully).

Shaybani Khan, having moved from Kakhdistan to Bogi Djahanoro called all local poets, painters and scientists. Muhammad Salih, being in charge of art, called Behzad to the khan several times. Mullah Abdurakhim didn't like painting – on his opinion it was an occupation resided to the impious Rafidah and other Shiah. But Shaybani knew how pictorial images made by Behzad brought fame to Husayn Bayqarah. Now he wanted to use the painter's talent for glorification of his own personality.

At the instance of the painter the khan was seated on a brocade quilt of reddish color; he leant against a black velvety pillow. They girded him with a thin gold thong and put a small copy-book in a gold cover, a pen and an inkpot beside him. They put a threatening khan's lash next to these objects. During thirty years of creative work, Behzad saw many sovereigns and knew that only laudatory words are

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<sup>202</sup> Zindan – a traditional Central Asian prison

acceptable in communication with them. That's why he said such words:

– "Your most humble servant might portray you, sovereign, on a fighting argamak with a naked saber. The fact that you are a great military leader is known to everybody. Now the world must see you as a great caliph who spent much time in the madrasah<sup>203</sup> excelling all the imams of our time in erudition. This is the reason why your most humble servant wants to portray you with the holy book and a golden pen.

– "I agree with you", - answered the khan.

When Behzad finished his work, Shaybani khan gathered his people to estimate it. Mullah Abdurakhim gave a glance at the image then shifted his gaze to the khan and wondered infinitely:

– "Well, it looks really as you are, sovereign!"

It was really seen that Shaybani Khan saw a lot of things in his life and he was very wise. An ignorant man would think that the man depicted on this picture is full of self-respect and that the painter respects him. But Muhammad Sultan had a keen and refined eye of an expert. He paid attention to the fact that the quilt on which the khan was sitting solemnly was of a blood red color. It seemed that the khan was sitting over a hole which was full of blood to the brim. And the edge of a thin gold belt flew down like a stream. It looked like a yellow snake with a dark-brown head, - twisting and ready to bite; the snake was creeping to the top from under the khan's crossed legs. A big black pillow seemed to be an incarnation of dark forces. The colors were chosen with a great skill. They indicated many things and Muhammad Sultan understood this symbolical language. He understood and was scared. What if the khan would guess the meaning of these colour symbols, these red black yellow and brown hints? Neither Behzad nor he, Muhammad Sultan who was the mediator would be left alive!

Muhammad Sultan began speaking hastily:

– "The prophet Muhammad liked green. The painter having shown his perspicacity felt that our great caliph liked green as well. Look, the dress of pure great khan is green. The wall against which the khan leant has the same color. It is... hm-hm-hm... suitable, - at last uttered the khan. – But... we have seen other images done by Mavlyana Behzad's brush..."

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<sup>203</sup> Madrasah – Islamic theological seminary and law school attached to a mosque

Shaybani khan meant the image of Husayn Bayqarah – that one where the inhabitant of Herat was depicted like a lion. In the other Behzad's canvas Husayn Bayqarah was setting out to the campaign and it seemed that the clouds, the sky and even the mountains rushed after him. Unusual circumstances told about the singularity of the represented! But there! Behzad having glorified the offspring of Timur's horse so much that he made him, Shaybani... as a usual person.

The khan couldn't find the words to express his difficult feelings which boiled immediately in his soul and required to be let out.

– "Give me the brush!" – he addressed to the painter; and everybody felt that the khan was dissatisfied with something.

Behzad passed a special box where the brushes stuck out from the cups with various paints. Shaybani snatched out sharply the brush from the cup with dark-brown paint. He studied drawing in a madrasah in Bukhara during his stay there; he knew how to hold the brush in his hand.

The khan peered at his image – what could he improve in it? Oh, here it is – the beard and the moustaches were very thin, they lowered his dignity; they made him an ordinary person!

– "We should depict the beard better!" – said Shaybani Khan. And he got down to business.

But there was too much paint on the brush and the beard became like a piece of thick felt.

Behzad let unintentionally a painful shriek slip as if his tooth was pulled out. But Muhammad Salih, having clenched the painter's wrist said immediately:

– "Oh! The touch of great khan's brush added some more beauty to the image!" – And he added turning back to Behzad: – "Mavlyana, this event is extremely important: great caliph, Iskander the second, touched the thing made by you, and look how everything becomes shining! The rumour about this event will resound for ages!"

"He didn't understand anything! He spoiled everything... violator", thought Behzad, but after the poet's spectacular tirade another thought occurred to his mind: "Really and truly... the rumors won't forget the khan; people will retell to each other with laugh how the khan stuck a thick felt to his ears... It's enough; it's enough to play with fire! It's good that only Muhammad Salih understood the symbolism of colors."

Behzad bowed to the khan and said with a hidden sarcasm:

– “My joy rose to the sky because the hand not of a painter but of the caliph who substitutes for our prophet now touched the work done by the painter, your slave.”

– “Praise to you!” – said the khan mercifully.

“It serves you right!” decided Behzad and looked at “a thick felt” once more.

## VI

It happens that humans' destinies are repeated almost completely – no matter what it concerns – a private life or a state affair.

But, telling the truth, Khadicha-begim tried with all her might not to repeat Zuhra-begim's pitiful fate, the mother of the former ruler of Samarqand Sultan Ali Mirza. Khadicha-begim knew how crafty and cruel Shaybani Khan was in relation to women. That's why she locked herself so strongly in the citadel Ikhtiyaraddin. But the forces were unequal. The fortress fell down the seventeenth day of the siege.

When Ubaydulla Sultan's soldiers forcing the doors reached the interior rooms, Khadicha-begim appeared suddenly herself being dressed-up pompously, in a high acute-angled hat with a huge pearl on the top. Sweaty soldiers pulled down their sabers and stood paralysed before the kingly-stately woman. Khadicha approached them slowly, the soldiers moved away giving her way and she said the word to see the commander.

The soldiers led her out in the yard where Ubaydulla Sultan was sitting solemnly on the horse. Khadicha-begim surrounded by her bondmaids, bowed to him gently and began speaking unhurriedly:

– “Mighty, as fate willed we are in your captivity and I ask you to accompany me to Shaybani Khan!”

Ubaydulla exchanged glances significantly with Mansur-bakhshi and smiled with mockery:

– “Our sovereign, the khan entrusted us to tell you the destined words.”

– “I'm listening to you, mighty sultan!”

Ishan in a white turban was among Ubaydulla Sultan's beys. Mansur-bakhshi and Ishan dismounted from the horses at Ubaydulla Sultan's signal. Mansur-bakhshi looked as a gallant groom in the

turban with gold-brocaded collar and red high boots. About seven or eight horsemen surrounded him representing groom's companions.

And then Ubaydulla Sultan addressed Khadicha-begim in a stately manner:

– “We marry you to Mansurbek by great imam's order!”

It looked like begim had known about it, smartened herself up! – The people burst out of laughing loudly.

Khadicha-begim gave a glance at Mansur-bakhshi's dark speckled face at his thick clumsy body.

– “I... I want to speak to the sovereign in private...”

– “Oh, the khan doesn't have any time for it, begim...”

– “But I'm from the royal family as well! You don't dare to insult me!”

To punish those who are descended from the families of the depraved Shia and Rafidah is a good godly affair!

– “Oh, sultan, I think that you must have a mother like I do as well. At least treat my maternal years with respect.”

– “My mother didn't do such abominable crimes as you did. And what mother having become a grandmother could kill her grandson? But bloodthirsty Khadicha-begim shed Mumin Mirza's blood! Khadicha-begim lost her proud bearing and hung her head, her hands hung down like loops in impotence.

And then Ubaydulla Sultan ordered his soldiers:

– “Lead her to ichkari<sup>204</sup>. Let Mansur-bakhshi make her begin to see clearly...” As soon as the bridal prayer was read Mansur-bakhshi expeled the bondwomen from the harem and stayed alone with Khadicha.

Her piercing shrieks and yells were heard deep into the night - it seemed that begim was put to unendurable torture.

At midnight Mansur-bakhshi went out from the harem pushing Khadicha-begim in front of him. The woman could hardly stand on her feet. They were going to the depth of the fortress yard lit by the moon.

– “Gold flower”, – Mansur-bakhshi was whispering to Khadicha-begim on the run. “There is a gold nightingale on it. There is a diamond in its beak. If you don't find it, you will feel even worse than now. Look for it! Quickly! Quickly!”

Khadicha-begim was thinking only about life-saving. That's why she led Mansur-bakhshi without thinking to the underground treasure

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<sup>204</sup> Ichkari - a part of the house for women. Strange men are not allowed to enter there

hidden in a secluded place of the fortress. A secret door hidden in the wall there - this wall enclosed the water reservoir intended for keeping potable water.

In the underground Mansur-bakhshi lit the torch which illuminated some trunks put in a row. The exhausted Khadicha-begim began opening it with her own keys with difficulty. Two trunks were filled up to the top with silver coins and one with gold. Silver hilts of sabres and daggers were kept in the third one. In the others there were women's precious adornments. Mansur-bakhshi's eyes kindled, his hands touched the riches of the trunk with avidity. Then he calmed down and became thoughtful.

- "But where is the gold flower? Where is the rose with emerald leaves?" - he asked angrily.

They turned everything upside down, but didn't find the flower.

- "Woe is me, woe is me!" - Khadicha-begim began to hawl suffering. "They stole the flower. They brought away my last hope. I'm lost now! Oh! I'm lost."

- "Keep silent! You used to deceive Husayn Bayqarah by your sighs and sobs. But you won't deceive me. Find the flower! Where have you hidden it?" - "It was in this trunk..."

- "You are telling lies! I think you have hidden it in some other place. Show me it right now!"

Mansur-bakhshi seized Khadicha-begim and pulled her out of the underground to the bank of the water reservoir.

- "Come on, show me! You can't deceive me!"

- "I don't deceive you, sir. I was deceived! Oh, it must have come to me the day of reckoning. What have I not done for the sake of Muzaffar-Mirza! And my son escaped, he deceived me. My own son condemned me for such kind of tortures. My own son!"

- "But you haven't given the golden flower to your son as well! You have hidden it! The sovereign himself told me: «There is a nightingale with the diamond in its beak». And I promised to find the flower with the golden nightingale and to gift it to the khan. Find it right now!"

- "But if it was stolen how I can find it?"

- "You are not going to find it! You don't want to do it! Take your charge out of it!"

Mansur-bakhshi pushed Khadicha-begim and she fell into the water reservoir with ice-cold water. He was looking angrily how she

was choling, how she was sinking. Then he stretched his hand, seized her for hair and took out of the water. He dragged her with difficulty in the direction of the harem. The tortures lasted for three days but the golden flower wasn't found. On the forth night Khadicha-begim died in Mansur-bakhshi's bedroom.

Mighty smart and artful Shaybani Khan didn't get experience from predecessor-conquerors as well. On the bank of the Murgab he was surrounded by the Iranian Shah Ismail's formidable army of thirty thousand.

Being firmly believed that he would gain one more victory, he led the forces on Shah Ismail in a cold and cloudy winter day. Just several hours before Shaybani excelled his enemy in quantity and his army's fighting ability. According to the information which was exact as it was usual at Shaybani Khan, Shah Ismail had twelve thousands at Merv. During a month these twelve thousand were shivering with cold and dampness of late autumn and even better to say of wintertime. But Shaybani khan locked himself in the fortress of Merv with fifteen thousands of well-fed, heated, well-armed soldiers and was waiting for his hour when he attacked Ismail's exhausted and weakened army.

But on any sly fellow there will be the most artful one! If Shaybani Khan had known how strong and insidious his enemy was this time, he wouldn't have sprung out from the walls of the fortress so recklessly. But glory of the victories deadens the feeling of care. A year ago when Shaybani Khan after capturing Herat led his troop of fifty thousands to the inside Iran and captured such cities as Astrabad, Gurgan and Kerman straight off, Shah Ismail looked a yielding fool. Then shah Ismail was at war with the Turkish Sultan Bayezid II in the west and that's why he didn't manage to prevent the violator from the north. But the violator was raging! Odious to Shaybani Khan, Shiah lived in Gurgan and especially in Kerman; he let his army rob out these cities,demanded to kill ruthlessly the apostate-Shiah and to destroy and bury their desecrated mosques<sup>205</sup>. It was not only a destructive war, which carried away thousands of lives but it was a religious war as well, - the defeat in this war lead Shah Ismail who was a fanatical Shiah to a particular kind of rage. But then the shah had to restrain this anger inside of him and sent to Shaybani Khan an ambassador with an amicable letter and rich gifts. This way he

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<sup>205</sup> Mosque – a place of worship for followers of Islam

recognized him as a sovereign of Maverennakhr and even of Khorasan and called the khan to good neighbourly relations.

Shaybani Khan's nephew, the commander of his selected cavalry Ubaydulla Sultan, his son Timur Sultan, his uncle Kuchkinchi-khan - all of them advised him to receive shah's ambassador with honor at least with the same honor as once Shaybani received Makhmud-khan's, sovereign of Tashkent, ambassadors, the sovereign of Andijan-Akhmad Tanbal's ambassadors and the sultan of Samarcand Ali-mirza's ambassadors. The advisers wanted to lull to sleep Shah Ismail's vigilance by a skillful diplomatic treatment and then to wait till the suitable hour and to put an end to him with a decisive blow as it was done with Makhmud-khan, Akhmad Tanbal and other enemies.

Now on the bank of the Murgab Shaybani Khan regreted that he hadn't followed that advice and had underestimated his enemy. Why did he refuse Ismail's offers then? Among other things a religious animosity was added. One could throw a bridge through this animosity but he the fighter for true faith, the great imam of Sunni couldn't do it. In Tashkent and Andijan his enemies were still Sunni as Shaybani himself. That's why it was possible to receive their ambassadors, to negotiate with them. «But how could he wag in front of the shah of Shia if I had proclaimed a holy war against him if I ordered to destroy their mosques!» – Shaybani khan told to his sultans. Didn't he tell every day: he who would be friends with Shia that person would defile the true faith, turn into Rafidah-apostate? He tried to keep his people from perniciousness as it seemed to him then influence of Shia in every possible way. But the influence was very powerful in Khorasan; it fascinated common people and ordinary soldiers. Shah Ismail knew what he did. For his part he proclaimed jihad in the name of a great thing of twelve imams in order to entrain as many people as possible: craftsmen, peasants and those who were wronged by life. Ismail proclaimed that he was sent in the world in order to restore justice defied by the sovereigns-Sunni - everybody is equal before Makhdi.

No, it was impossible to receive the ambassadors of such shah and exchange gifts with them! Don't saw the branch you are sitting on! He, Shaybani, is not an ordinary khan - he is a caliph!

«I tell my people to be irreconcilable to the hersy of the Shia. It means that I must be irreconcilable myself!» – Shaybani Khan repeated persistently. He received the Shah's ambassador as if he

were a beggar asking for charity. And he sent to Shah Ismail as present dervish stuff - a kashkul<sup>206</sup>. This present could mean only one thing: «Are you the son of a poor sheikh<sup>207</sup>? So how are you going to have a claim on the throne? You would better hold the kashkul on your belt and wander leaning against the staff and asking for charity! »

After it, Shah Ismail concluded a truce with the Turkish Sultan and began assembling troops against Shaybani Khan. He tried to make known as much as possible in Iran and Khorasan a rude and arrogant answer of the khan-inhabitant of the steppe. Thereby he increased the number of his supporters.

Moreover, Shaybani Khan began receiving alarming news from Maverrennakhr - arbitrariness of khan's nomadic deputies caused disorders in Samarcand, Bukhara and the Fergana Valley. Khan had to let go thirty thousand soldiers led by Ubaydulla Sultan and Timur Sultan: they had to retain Maverrennakhr at any rate. Dissatisfaction with Shaybani Khan matured among the sultan's top people. Come to think of it - the story repeats! - after great conquests deputies of the regions tried to get independence as regards their «master», the centrifugal force was increasing. But what Shaybani Khan did in such a position? He deprived Ubaydulla Sultan of Bukhara, he deprived his uncle Kuchkinchi of Turkestan, he deprived Khamza Sultan of Gissar and appointed other deputies who thought less independently and who were more obedient. He didn't allow his son Timur Sultan to approach the throne for a long time. He was afraid that a fervent fast on decisions and clever son could be the head of the conspiracy against the father.

Shah Ismail knew about discords in the khan's family and disturbances in Maverrennakhr. In spite of the approach of winter, he decided to go to Herat where he had settled. Nomads' position in Khorasan wasn't notable for steadiness as well. That's why they retreated in Merv. This powerful fortress locked the way to Maverrennakhr; the khan sent there heralds with an order that thirty thousand select soldiers having gone earlier had to go to help him immediately. The discord between commanders arose again. The following argument was laid down in order that they wouldn't think Shaybani Khan was afraid of shah and that he ran from him.

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<sup>206</sup> Kashkul – a bowl or a pot meant to be used deliver food to the poor

<sup>207</sup> Sheikh – a wise man or an Islamic scholar

— “Go away as far as possible from the boundaries of vile Shia. The population in Merv is Sunni. We will decoy the shah there. Meanwhile our regiments will come from Maverrennakhr and the sheikh’s son will be caught into our strong trap!”

The plan was considered a wise one as usual. Shah Ismail humbling the khan sent him the letters with appeal to go into the field and to fight openly with the son of the poor sheikh come with a dervish kashkul and staff. Otherwise he would doubt the khan’s might. Proud Shaybani khan stood Ismail’s malicious joy, clenching his teeth.

The story repeated: once Babur and now Shaybani, his enemy, locked himself in the fortress and waited for the arrival of reinforcement with passion and anger. The experienced commander knew that no matter how ardent and brave the twenty-four-year-old Shah Ismail was, it was impossible to conduct a seige all winter - snow and frosty winds would make him raise the seige sooner or later. And when the Shia’s exhausted and drained, heartsick army went away because of the unachieved gold - then and not earlier Shaybani Khan would attack the shah from the warm fortress, defeat him, defeat surely! After the victory Iran would fall into his hands. And further the way to Bagdad and to the holy motherland of the prophet – Mecca would be open. All dar-ul-islam, the world of the faithful Muslims, would have to admit that Shaybani Khan was the true caliph of all times and dar-ul-islam would recognize him as the second Iskander! The army with thirty thousand people which was going from Maverrennakhr to Merv was spending a lot of time in order to move from one place to another and this spoiled khan’s voluptuous dreams. There was the only one obstacle in his way - the river Amudarya, a «furious river». But his military leaders Ubaydulla Sultan, Timur Sultan and Khamza Sultan who were usually so fast loitered then. Shaybani khan guessed the reasons of their tardiness: it was an offence on him. He deprived them the profitable position of deputies. They certainly harboured anger against their sovereign, the khan. They surely talked among each other: «We walked in the first ranks in all dangerous undertakings; our sabres brought the khan victories in all big battles. Now the khan is in a state of bliss with young wives and doesn’t care them, doesn’t appreciate them, dismisses them, humiliates them. Why then, let him dispense with us! Let him fight with this shah-Shia one-to-one!»

In his thoughts Shaybani Khan objected in anger and fury: «Ungrateful dogs! But no - puppies! Isn't it clear, all of you would vanish without me? Is it the time for offences when something important is being decided? It is more important than my destiny! To gain the upper hand over him or he will gain the upper hand over me, which means to live or not to live to our dynasty. Either they or we!» The khan swore: as soon as he overcame the Iranian shah he would change his military leaders in the army of Maverrennakhr and he would punish everybody who was to blame for the delay!

But the army didn't go, there was nobody to be punished and the most essential thing was that he had nobody with whom he could gain the victory. Bitter frost began and Shah Ismail sent another letter to the khan. He called him a coward and informed him that he was going to raise the seige. He would return for reprisal in spring.

From the fortress walls of Merv they watched with interest the soldiers of the shah take apart their yurts and tents load their bullock carts draw up in rows, and move away in the south-west direction.

Shaybani Khan ordered to prepare his cavalry for a swift rush. Before they opened the gates he had been looking to the direction of the Amudarya for a long time - he had been still waiting for reinforcement. But inhabitants' alert eyes of steppe confirmed the message of the spies: thirty thousands from Maverrennakhr were still over the river. And then the khan made up his mind. Five hundred soldiers were left for protection of the treasure and the harem; all the others were lead by Shaybani. Shah Ismail moved away from the walls of Merv. Would Shaybani Khan really let his bitterest enemy go? What would they tell about him then - who had superiority and didn't make his mind to fight without his famous sultans? Like Shah Ismail he would be blamed for cowardice? No, he, Shaybani, the khan and caliph, had never been a coward! He would prove to all dar-ul-islam that his victories were gained by himself! Oh, if he were lucky today, if he were lucky...

The order was executed: the cavalry was ready. Mullah Abdurakhim approached the khan. He began begging the khan to abstain from leaving the fortress, hardly moving his lips that had turned blue with frost wind:

- "Great khan, we don't have any right to expose your precious life to such a danger. It would be better to wait the army from

Maverrennakhr But where is it, where, and how long we have to wait for them, for these... dogs!" – The khan cried angrily.

– "It is difficult to cross such a river as the Amu in winter. But I believe: Ubaydulla Sultan and Timur Sultan will arrive soon!"

– "Will they arrive when the winter wind wipes shah Ismail's tracks off? If these sultan-dogs wanted to arrive in time they would do it! They leave me alone purposely! They think that I'll be afraid of fighting without them! They boast that all the victories were gained by them! But I'll prove that I have gained them myself! Myself... together with these golden eagles!"

Shaybani Khan approached the cavalry and began talking loudly and clearly:

– "Have you seen, my golden eagles, in what disorder our enemies are drawing away? Their number is less than ours! They are exhausted with winter cold. I believe: God will give us the victory today, one more victory! The prophet is on our side! The apostates must be thrown down! Fly on the enemies, golden eagles! Catch up with them; beat them straight away until they draw up in a battle formation! God, give us another victory, one more victory! Amen! God is the greatest!"

– "Amen! God is the greatest! – A usual prayerful cry went sternly through the ranks. And the cavalry led by the khan rushed like a snowball for the divergent army. But it was a trap.

Kizilbashes<sup>208</sup> drew back ostentatiously. Spies and scouts who usually brought the khan the exact information about enemies let him down this time. They didn't know that the shah had brought only a small part of his army to the walls of Merv. He placed twenty thousands of selected soldiers not far from Merv, having hidden them skilfully in the desert sand dunes on the other bank of the Murgab. Twelve years ago, Shaybani Khan used the same military craft against rebels of Bukharan town Karakul. After having lured out of the fortress its defenders by a false retreat, he entered the town, killed all the inhabitants, all to a man, and erected a «minaret» of men's heads in the horse bazaar. Yes, Shaybani khan believed in his force excessively, it didn't occur to him that a military leader could use such a military craft against him. Twelve thousand soldiers of Shah Ismail drew back, they ran from Merv, - ahead, ahead after them! They crossed the Murgab on made bridge at the place Makhmudi - didn't

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<sup>208</sup> Kizilbash – the title given to a wide variety of Shia Islamic militant groups

drop behind, burst into their army immediately! Ismail left there about three hundred of soldiers for protection of the bridge, and when Shaybani khan's threatening cavalry approached the bridge, these three hundred kizilbashes took panic flight supposedly. On the bridge, on the bridge! They could cross it only in this place, over the bridge, - both sides were steep and high, there was not any other crossing, it was impossible to enter the chilling water of the winter river. It meant to go ahead, on the bridge, over the bridge ahead!

Until all the army of Shaybani Khan was on the other bank Ismail's troops, hidden in the shelters, didn't betray their presence. Only at being a substantial distance from the bridge, they rushed from the dunes anticipated with a cloud of arrows and in a torrent of stone shots from guns which had been settled skilfully beforehand. The Kizilbashes attacked Shaybani from all four sides. Only then the khan realized that he was entrapped. He remembered that once he made such a trap to the people of Karakul. He called upon Allah not for victory but for his sake. Gallop to the bridge! But the wooden bridge had been already destroyed. Horses and men fell to the river under pressure from the back rows and soon the riverbed was heaped up with the dead bodies. The khan with his selected soldiers rushed along the bank of the river to the left and found himself in the pennage for hibernation. At the same moment the kizilbashes surrounded it and attacked it. The soldiers of khan's guard fought to the bitter end and died off. Ismail seeing how firmly the khan was defending moved the guns up to the pennage.

That settled the matter. The wounded horses were infuriated with the thunder of the guns rushed about trampled down the men and each other. Shaybani khan with a naked sabre in his hand tried to put in order the soldiers in this mess by his loud shout but a stone shot fallen into the head of the khan's horse stopped him. The horse crashed down and the horseman fell on the ground as well.

Shaybani Khan didn't have time to free his legs from the stirrups - one leg was pressed down with the carcass of the horse. Another horse fell down right into the khan. Shaybani fainted from broken ribs being pressed and was trampled down in the ground.

After the end of the battle, one of kizilbashi beys (he knew the khan by sight) found his body among the fallen bodies. The ground around the khan was filled up with the bodies of the enemies and his

people - including Mullah Abdurakhim, Mansur-bakhshi and many others.

The winners cut off the head of dead Shaybani Khan piercing it with a spade. Then they brought it to the shah and threw it to the hoofs of the horse. Then taking vengeance on the enemies for Shia's blood shed by Shaybani Khan they stripped the skin from the head and made a dummy stuffed with straw. The Turkish Sultan Bayezid II exposed the Shia to persecution and caused offences to the shah in the west. Shah Ismail sent him as a «present» the dummy of Shaybani Khan's head stuffed with straw with an obvious hint. His ally Aga Sultan received the right hand unbound from the khan's body.

The winners trimmed Shaybani Khan's skull up with gold and drank wine from such a «goblet»<sup>209</sup>.

## KUNDUZ. SAMARQAND BETWEEN TWO SWORDS

### I

Khanzoda-begim with her ten-year-old son Khurram had been on the way to Merv through Balch and Kunduz for two weeks.

The caravan roads were difficult - even to ride on the back of a white camel in a refined palanquin covered with a silk cape and gold tassels. These days they crossed many dunes and elevations, passed forests and steppes crossing rivers. It was still far from Kunduz. Khanzoda-begim was tired; the boy was tired as well. And four bondwomen were tired too and six servants and guardians, hundred of kizilbashes.

... Shah Ismail didn't display mercy to the hated Shaybani's wife at once - to Khanzoda-begim. Nadjmi Soni («The second Star») who was really the close companion-in-arms of Ismail wanted to take her to his harem during the sharing out of the khan's wives. Her only son Khurram was put in prison - for the time being because nobody wanted to spare the khan's offsprings.

Cut the ground from under their feet - it would be right!

But Babur's heralds from Kunduz came to shah Ismail with a message.

Babur congratulated the shah with a magnificent victory gained over

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<sup>209</sup> If these descriptions had been left by shah Ismail's enemies we could doubt their authenticity. But the given details were taken from the book "Tarihi olam oroyi Abbosi" which was created by shah Ismail's well-wishers and from Khondamir's book "Khabibur siyar".

the invader-Shaybani and asked especially to spare his sister Khanzoda-begim who got into the harem of the violator unwillingly.

Shah Ismail heard that Babur was an enlightened ruler. He knew that Sunni Babur was tolerant and that he was the bitterest enemy of Shaybani and those who were keeping his policy. The Iranian shah was going to continue the war against the Shaybanid dynasty, to take away all Maverrennakhr. It was impossible to find a better ally than Babur. Besides, Babur moved his army closer to Maverrennakhr in Kunduz not without reason, hoping to widen it there. It was clear that Babur had an eye on Maverrennakhr as well, and moreover he had more rights on these lands than someone else. Shah Ismail decided to take occasion to make Babur his ally and debtor: to win over Maverrennakhr. From the Shaybanid dynasty by his help and then we would see whose rights would be stronger.

Shah tempered mercilessness with mercy. Khanzoda-begim and even her son (her and not the son of the self-constituted Sunni caliph!) got their liberty. They were let go to Babur and accompanied not only by a hundred soldiers but by a noble Muhammadjan one of shah's viziers.

Khanzoda-begim knew nothing about the shah's interest and didn't guess about secret missions, about military alliance with which Iranian ambassador came with her. But she had a foreboding of any new troubles preparing to involve her and her son in their abyss. The much suffered woman felt vague and anxious.

She wasn't afraid of shah's soldiers protecting her and her son and not touching her bondwomen. She received evidence many times that these kizilbashes looking so severe behaved very polite with women, - apparently, they worshipped not without reason Bibi Fatima the prophet Muhammad's only daughter, the mother of holy twins Hasan and Huseyn. Some of the kizilbashes even thought that Shah Ismail himself was a distant offspring not of a little known sheikh-ascetic but of Husayn, Ali and Fatima's son. Only among such a generation could be «a hidden imam».

Khanzoda-begim felt gratitude to the Shia shah and to his soldiers. But the feeling of anxiety and fear didn't leave her. It seemed that this feeling ran against her from mountain gorge and midwoods. The winter had just finished, a lot of snow was in the mountains. When they went down on steep slopes and picked their way through narrow gorges, it seemed to begin that just on that point a collapse

would happen and it would bury them under it. She had a fright during the thunder with lightings - streams crashing down impetuously became very dangerous indeed.

Once they spent the night at the edge of the fortress on the left bank of the Amudarya in the place which was called Surbaytal. Khanzoda heard tigers' roars which lay in wait for deers and she couldn't fall asleep all night. There where the rivers Guri and Kunduz flew together the Amudarya marshlands covered with cane began. The air was so damp and musty there that it was difficult to breathe. They said that Shaybani Khan's younger brother Makhmud Sultan, who survived in many bloody battles, fell ill with an unknown fever in Kunduz and came to his end for several days. Khanzoda-begim, remembering about the fever looked at her son with anxiety.

Once she heard a proverb in Kunduz: «If you want to die you should go to Kunduz», and having taken it as a joke laughed at it. But now she was in no mood for laughing. She worried about her son more than about herself - he was her own sweet creature conceived from the unloved old Shaybani. But it was really her son because during ten years the khan-father saw Khurram seldom and wasn't very interested in him.

«But if Mirza Babur is not in Kunduz, if he is crossing the mountains went to Andijan or returned to Kabul, what will they do?» – Khanzoda-begim worried. Kunduz, surrounded by the mountains of the Pamirs and Hindu Kush, seemed to her to be a frightful trap.

Once at midday there where the road moving off the bank of the Amu climbed in the mountains a detachment three times bigger than their guard blocked their way. Soon they cleared that comers were patrol men sent by Babur. Khanzoda-begim sighed with relief. The commander of the guard detachment Muhammad Kukaldash led the caravan from the fortress on the hill. Now the valley seemed to Khanzoda-begim beautiful: the wind streaming from the mountains was caressing, the forests on the slopes were attractive, and the road along the river was friendly.

The former khans of Kunduz built a fortress and the palace inside it in a place favourable for health. «It is done tastefully», – Khanzoda-begim thought with satisfaction and calmness: joy overcame her at the thought that she would meet her dear brother in this palace.

The butler met them at the gates. He led Khanzoda-begim, her son and her escorts to a particular well tidied room and retreated hastily in order to inform immediately Babur about his sister's arrival.

Only several minutes passed and a horseman of thirty years with a beautiful small beard and well-groomed mustaches ran into the room. At first Begim took him for one of Babur's beks. Then another person appeared after him.

Khanzoda remembered him as a nineteen-year-old young man without a beard: nothing was left from the former youngster in this man. And the dress of a broad-shouldered horseman with moustaches cut smoothly and with a beard wasn't very royal as well: silver and white turban without decorations, a simple silk chapan. Having heard about his sister's arrival Babur ran from «shelter of solitude» in a house dress.

Khanzoda-begim, still not believing, looked intently at the face of the come running man. Babur stopped amazingly. A lump in the throat didn't prevent him from crying:

– "Haven't you recognized me?! I'm your brother! You're guilty in everything Babur!"

Yes, yes, and these dear eyes of Baburjan, this dear voice of Baburjan: Khanzoda rushed to the brother. She put her palms to his chest then put there her face. Babur embraced his sister and the first words heard by them through sobs, tears of joy and sorrow were the following:

– "Baburjan... I went away... to the khan... contrary to your order... I know... stones of gloating reproaches fell down on your head because of it... But you should understand me; I couldn't act the other way then..."

– "Yes, I knew... I understood that you sacrificed yourself to save my life. I'll be indebted to you all my life!"

– "And today... haven't you repaid it... if to speak about the debt. You've saved me, Baburjan! You've saved me from captivity, from Nadjmi Soni's harem... I'm grateful to God thousand times that I have such a brother as you!"

– "I'm proud of you, sister! It's a pity that our mother didn't reach this day!"

Khanzoda-begim knew about mother's death last year. But even now a sharp pain of the fact that she would never see her mother anymore ran through her.

– “Why did God separate us with mother so early?” – Khanzoda moved aside from Babur and looked at his eyes. – “When did she die? Tell me exactly - how?”

– “Five years ago... From typhus. She was buried in the mausoleum Bogi Novruz in Kabul.”

– “She came to the end not having reached fifty years!”

– “Yes, she did. And how many people live till eighty and ninety years!”

– “Sufferings because of us brought her to her grave, Baburjan!”

Muhammad Kukaldash stood still not having uttered a word earlier said:

– “What can we do against the destiny, begim?... How fortunate it is that you have met with your sovereign, with your brother. Our mother's soul rejoices at it... Let's sit and pray for her.”

The three of them kneeled on a brocade quilt. Kasimbek entered and sat close to them without saying a word. He read a memorial prayer for eternal rest of Kutlug Nigor-hanum's soul with a sorrowful and quiet but still melodious voice. And only having stopped praying he congratulated Khanzoda-begim on her arrival.

Khanzoda-begim called by a sign her son Khurram who was sitting in the corner among the servants and was looking not in a friendly manner from there at what was going on. The boy came up and sat at mother's legs. He resembled his father, Shaybani Khan, for a light skin of the face, for blueness of his eyes, for his short neck and for sparse eyebrows. Though Babur hadn't seen Shaybani nearby he felt this resemblance: «These features are not ours, they are not ours... And who knows whether this boy will be ours?»

Khurram wasn't seven years old when the father proclaimed him his deputy in Balkh. This position was executed by the tutor, Makhdi Sultan, Khurram got used soon to people high in their rank and age bowing before him, a little boy.

The mother, having indicated the son to Babur said that he was his uncle. But Khurram couldn't overcome is alienation to an unfamiliar man immediately, in his soul he had the feeling of scorn - and not only because of the simplicity of his dress. He greeted Babur

unwillingly with a nod of the head. He didn't stand up, didn't come up to him, and didn't say anything.

Having pulled the son in his shoulder slightly, Khanzoda-begim remembered him calmly and severely:

– “Come to your senses! We are at the reception of Mirza Babur! Shah Ismail liberated us only at his request!”

It seemed that he began to see clearly. He opened his eyes widely. He stared at the uncle with amazement and gratitude: Babur saw that the boy's eyes were big and vivid like the eyes of his mother.

Khurram didn't forget the lessons of behavior taught at the court of the sovereigns. Having pushed his leg forward he kneeled on the right knee in front of Babur put his hands on the chest, bowed low, and said touchingly with clear boyish voice:

– “Sovereign, I'm here to serve you.”

Babur noticed that Khurram's nose looked like Khanzoda-begim's as well. And suddenly he felt a strong affection for his nephew. He must have been a proud boy. It wasn't important that this warm affection was filled with a bitter smoke of recently gone out fire.

– “If you've come to serve, you are welcome, nephew!” – Babur said and seated him on the right hand...

A plump woman of about fifty years old - the custodian of the harem - having asked permission, entered and said that Mokhim-begim wanted to see the noble sister of her husband and sovereign.

Babur looked at his sister smiled in a meaningful way and ordered the custodian:

– “Tell her to take Mirza Khumayun with her.”

Mokhim-begim, Babur's young wife, was ashamed to enter unceremoniously the room where strange men were. Kasimbek and Muhammad Kukaldash left the room with Babur's permission.

A lot of people crowded at the doors of the chamber destined for Khanzoda. Khodja Kalonbek from Margilan, Takhir from Kuva, Said-khan from Tashkent, Madjid Barlas from Samarqand, soldier Yusuf Andijani - all wanted to see Khanzoda-begim, to hear the message from their motherland. Kasimbek ordered them to break up.

– “Let her talk long enough with her relatives, then we will ask the permission for you.”

## II

A young woman in a dress of peachy color which outlined her thin figure entered the room leading her three-year-old son dressed up luxuriously («heir to the throne!»). Khanzoda noticed immediately how much the boy resembled Babur. She rose quickly and rushed towards her. Mokhim-begim bowed modestly, with dignity and elegance. The sister-in-law came up; put her hand on the tender and round shoulders. Mokhim raised her white silk veil for a moment. Khanzoda gave a glance at her face («charming, charming!»), turned to Babur and exclaimed shining with joy:

– “I congratulate you! Oh, how you suit each other! I wish you were happy, my dear!”

Small Khumayun looked up with interest at the strange beautiful woman holding on his mother's hem. Khanzoda-begim took him in her arms and the boy - what a strange thing! – He didn't keep away from her. And when Khanzoda clung to his cheek with her cheek the boy began smiling. Khanzoda-begim came up to her son with Khumayun on her arms, and put him on the ground and said:

– “Well, make the acquaintance younger with big brother!” At first three-year-old «heir to the throne», Babur's offspring and ten-year-old offspring of Shaybani looked at each other silently. Then Khumayun became interested in the smart small dagger which stood in beauty on Khurram's belt and he stretched out his hand. Khurram caught the hand, shook it carefully to greet him, but it was obvious he didn't want to give him his dagger. He stepped back.

The adults burst out of laughing involuntarily. Babur thought: «He doesn't want to give his things to anybody». But Khanzoda-begim didn't think - she was glad. The fears and forebodings of some unknown dangers which exposed her to shiver on the way to Kunduz now changed into joy. It was the joy to see these boys, not young monarchs, but common children, the willingness to smile in response to charming Mokhim's confused smiles, the joy of empathy to her brother who was loved dearly by her since they were like these children, since then and up till now he was loved dearly... A wonderful joyful spring came to her soul after a fierce dark winter.

Khanzoda-begim looked at Mokhim one more time then cast a naughty glance at Babur:

– “Fortune smiled on you, my sovereign! How did you manage to win such a beauty? Where are you from, Mokhim-begim?”

– “From Khorasan, noble begin.”

Mokhim begged her husband with all her look: «Don't embarrass me, don't tell her how I threw the flower over the wall in Herat...» Babur's soul sang with joy but he said with an intentionally boring voice as if he was reading a document that mentioned above begin, his wife, was a relative to Husayn Bayqarah but four years ago her father not having agreed with Badiuzzaman had to move to Gazni. He, Babur, invited her husband and brothers from Gazni to Kabul. After it they met again there, in Kabul.

And he asked his sister, changing suddenly the tone:

– “There is Hazrati Djam town between Herat and Murgab, have you seen it?”

– “Yes, I have. I know that it was named so after poet Jami wasn't it? ”

– “It's true. But I want to tell the other thing: my begin's descendants on the mother's side turned out to be Jami's relatives.” – He added playfully: – “I tell it to say: my begin is such an expert of poetry and such an admirer of poets that she knows by heart all the ghazals of great masters – Abdurakhman Jami and Mir Alisher. That's why when I write a ghazal - you wouldn't believe - she finds only drawbacks in it.”

She answered on his joke with another joke:

– “I have to try: my sovereign exaggerates my ability to be a critic!”

Khanzoda-begin supported their playful duel.

– “But I think no matter how he would praise you, it wouldn't be enough!”

– “Thank you, merciful!” – And having kept silence the young woman began her talk about Khanzoda herself: – “I heard many things about your bravery, your selflessness and dreamed of meeting with you. I thank the God that today this dream has become true. Mercious begin, I imagined you as a heroine from a tale. But when I saw you I thought that invented heroines are not worth of being compared with such a woman as you... The most honourable place of our house and of our soul belongs to you.”

Khanzoda-begin felt the words were pronounced in all sincerity. She remembered Aysha-begin unwillingly («I think that it was right that Baburjan divorced with his first wife») and felt sorry

for herself - God didn't give her such happiness as he gave to her brother, he doomed her to sufferings in Shaybani Khan's harem.

Babur noticed only then that grey locks appeared in the hair of the thirty four-year-old Khanzoda-begim. The sister reminded Babur of their mother's appearance when she became a widow. Now Khanzoda-begim was a widow as well. Babur said to his sister touchingly:

- "I'm your debtor forever, begim! I shan't forgive Shah Ismail's nobility. Because he brought you alive and healthy in our abode!"

- "If you let me, I'll tell you something about the shah", - Khanzoda-begim brightened up in her face. - "Shah Ismail has the wife whose name is Tadjli-hanum. She is extraordinary beautiful, I can tell you. She brought me to the shah. I heard many terrifying gossips before: they say that Shah Ismail kills the Sunni<sup>210</sup>, skinned them. I was afraid him to faint, but I went to him. I entered and began looking for a monster from a tale. And suddenly I saw a well-featured horseman of twenty-five years old sitting in the throne. He was without a beard; he had only a long thin moustache. The nose was long too. The eyes were enormous. He spoke in the Azerbaijani language but I managed to make out all words. He holds sacred the prophet's daughter Fatima, the mother of all saints... that's why they respect women especially; I felt it on my way."

- "Before we respected women as well", - Babur interrupted her. - "The madrasah in Samarqand was called after Bibi-hanum not without reason. The madrasah of Saray Mulk-hanum was there on the opposite side of it. There is a tomb of Shodi Mulk-hamun and Tuman-Aki in the burial vault Shahi-Zinda. There is a famous madrasah Gavharshod-begim in Herat. All these names are connected with Amir Timur and his descendants."

- I don't know, maybe at Amir Timur's time there was much respect to worthy women", - said Mokhim-begim, giving a glance at the husband, - "but now it's not so..."

- "It's a predestination!" - Babur said. - "At that time - the times of the flourishing of science and art - the respect to women increased. The science and art could always rise really only with the assistance of women: they inspire poets, scientists and strive for these inspired

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<sup>210</sup> Sunni – the largest division of Islam. Sunni Islam is the heir to the early central Islamic state, in its acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the order of succession of the first four caliphs

things themselves. But at the times of decline as it is difficult for scientists and painters, the women are humiliated."

– "It's very fair. It hurts to see that a spiritual decline about which our sovereign said has spread to all Transoxiana now!" – Khanzoda-begim became gloomy. "Khans and sultan of various nomadic tribes are possessed by endeavour to capture all our country, to be more exact - the body of the country. They don't care about its soul... I shouldn't speak badly about my husband dead in battle, but there is no getting away... Shaybani khan united separated and quarreling with each other tribes, captured Transoxiana and erected a madrasah in Samarqand in his honour. He built a bridge across the Zerafshan. Here are some of his good actions. But how rudely he treated the scientists and painters and how he despised women! He became angry if he was told that Timur's offsprings erected madrasahs and mausoleums in honor of their women. He thought that great Ulugbek, taking a great interest in sciences and arts sank into oblivion the true faith and having glorified women opened them the way to madrasah and spoiled their morality. I managed to see the books «Shaybaniname» and «Nusratname» written of his own free will, - there is not a single female name, they say namelessly about shakh's and sultan's mothers and daughters - «the daughter of that person», «the wife of that person». It turned out that a strange man has no right to say the name of somebody else's wife, even a chronicler - such a wild explanation was given by the khan who had studied in the madrasah after all and who composed love verses anyhow." – On these words Babur smiled but it was sad. Khanzoda continued: – "But the present Shaybani dynasty doesn't have such knowledge, they have only a rough force. The men of science and art leave the estates of the sultan-despots - some of them run away to Khorasan, the others run away to Istanbul, the others run away to Kabul... We centre all the hopes on you, Baburjan!" - it seemed that the sister forgot about court treatments. – "A lot of enlightened persons look at you, my brother, they think that you are destined to restore the great spirit of creation inherent to Transoxiana from the earliest times. You should return to the motherland, to drive away black clouds from the Sun and enlightenment!"

«Science... Enlightenment... Beauty... Poetry... It is good, of course, but Unfortunately the world doesn't hold on to such things", – Babur thought but objected to himself immediately: – "But what does

the authority cost without them?» But the authority, his authority can be restored in Maverenakhr.

After Shaybani Khan's death, he sent many trusted people to Samarqand and Andijan. He knew that thousands of people exhausted from the oppressions of the nomadic sultans were ready to rebel as soon as Babur came to Maverenakhr.

– “Last week good news came from Andijan”, – said Babur as if answering his own thoughts, – “Said Muhammad, our relative on our mother's line, gathered the supporters around him and sent away sultan inhabitants of the steppe from Andijan. Said Muhammad wrote to me: «Come quickly to Andijan through Karategin, the land of your father's looks forward to you!»

– “It means that now you want to go to Andijan?”, - asked Khanzoda-begim lowering her voice.

Babur shook his head with the same otherwordly look - he was going to send a detachment led by a reliable bek to Andijan, he himself wanted to go straight to Samarqand through Gissar. But he knew that his forces weren't enough for such a double stroke. And he couldn't help taking into consideration Shah Ismail who wanted to offer him a military alliance against the nomadic sultans (Babur knew about the intentions of the messenger who had come with Khanzoda-begim. And the meaning of the fact that Ismail endowed Babur so generously having let go his sister was clear even without the messenger).

No, he couldn't go to Andijan or all the more to Samarqand single-handedly. Babur knew that Timur Sultan, a courageous military leader, Shaybani's son, sent the ambassadors with presents to the shah. Oh, Allah forbid, if two mighty states band together. «Nobody wants to give back his own things». They could band together only at his expense - at the expense of the third person, moreover he was the weakest one, for the time being he was the weakest. But in the case he would be with Shah Ismail for the time being...

He began his talk with the women about shah Ismail's poetic gift.

– “Our delegate Mirza-khan whom I'll send to him soon, once showed me the shah's verses. He has a delicate gift, he writes wonderful ghazals in old Tatar language. He called himself modestly «Hatoi».”

– “It's true, he is a capable poet”, – said Khanzoda-begim. – “I heard his ghazals when kizilbashes sang them. And shah when he received me praised my brother with the following words: «We hold

Babur-shah and Babur-poet in respect in our souls». And then he read by heart the couplet from the ghazal - many ghazals of our sovereign are performed to the music in Herat, - he read and said: «Chok yahshi! Very good!»

There was nothing to conceal, it was pleasant for Babur to listen to this praise. He asked being confused:

- "It's interesting, what ghazal is it?"

Khanzoda-begim, having put a finger to the lips, tried to remember the words. Mokhim came to the aid of her:

- "Does the ghazal begin so:

*My soul - the bud of the rose; and blood is running on the petals...*"

- "Yes, yes, exactly!" - And Khanzoda finished the couplet herself:

*"Springs go away and come again - but my rose isn't destined to open!"*

- "To my mind, these lines echoed in my soul not without reason", - Babur said. - "Because he was deprived of father early, he went through persecutions, suffered a lot. They say that now Shah Ismail is going to be guided by fairness..."

- "He told me so." - Khanzoda-begim referred to her talk with the shah again and again: - "The Sunni destroyed twelve imams and the fairness in the world together with them. But the twelfth imam - Hazrat Makhdi, hasn't died, he will come down from the sky to the ground soon and punish the Sunni... And Shah Ismail called himself the envoy of the imam Makhdi and not the other way. That's why the Shia glorifies their shah, called them «the imam of the world»." Babur shook his head with suspicion:

- "It's a strange thing - these self-constituted titles! Shaybani called himself the caliph, the deputy of the God's prophet, threatened to exhaust all the Shia. And how did it finish? To fight for the power, for achievement of own goals - it's clear, but what for do they implicate there the questions of the religion?"

- "But the struggle between the Sunni and the Shia arose because of the struggle for power, sovereign", - Mokhim noticed.

Babur couldn't help admitting that Mokhim was right. - "It's sad but the destiny probably wanted the people of dar-ul-islam to suffer and torment each other till now because of the dispute broken out at such remote times..."

– “Oh, Allah, there was not any troubles that the people of Herat wouldn’t suffer from because of this dispute! It’s even scary to remember about it!” – Khanzoda-begim exclaimed.

Babur knew from her that kizilbashes revenged Shaybani Khan’s followers in Herat. The crowd of the Shia dragged out the eighty-year-old man, Taftazani, the Sunni Sheikh-ul-islam<sup>211</sup> into the street and made him adopt Shiism<sup>212</sup> in presence of a great concourse. When Taftazani turned down this order the Shia hung him on a tree and burnt the tree with the dead body of the executed man. The erudite people of Herat, and not only they, passed in a whisper from mouth to mouth the lines of Abdurakhman Jami as if they were composed for the present time:

*The Sunni, the Shia... These discords make me sick.*

*The faults, a fire worshipper, give me - my soul is burning!*  
«And you, Jami, who are you yourself?»

*- I hear a question addressed to me.*

*I'll answer: «I'm not a Sunni donkey and not a Shia dog».*

This poem reached the kizilbashes as well. Being infuriated they brought young Shia fanatics to Abdurakhman Jami’s tomb. They threw down a gravestone, a sacrilegious hand brought to the top the inferior dot in the letter revealing the name of the great poet which was stamped on the stone and they got «Homiy» - «Immature» instead of «Jomiy». They broke a gilded door of a fine work. His great friend Mir Alisher set it on Jami’s tomb. At last they committed everything to flames!

Babur heard about these things for the first time. He was perplexed:

– “Couldn’t Shah Ismail admit such a wild trick?”

– “They say the shah was unaware of it. The deputy of the shah in Khorasan Najmi Soni was at the head of the mess in Herat.”

– “The long and short of it, great Jami is right a thousand times: the discord between the Shia and the Sunni makes people with a soul sick... Alas, I wish disappointment didn’t overtake me again: I thought that at last destiny granted me a courageous, noble and enlightened

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<sup>211</sup> Sheikh-ul-Islam – a title of superior authority in the issues of Islam

<sup>212</sup> Shiism – the second largest branch of Islam. Shiite Islam originated as a political movement supporting Ali (cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam) as the rightful leader of the Islamic state

friend-sovereign in Shah Ismail. But it looks like he got entangled by discords what the Sunnah he should hold of."

Mokhim-begim tried to smile to her husband pacifying him:

– "As we can see there is no a rose without thorns anywhere, my sovereign!"

Babur looked at his wife and then at his sister. She said not without efforts:

– "There is a proverb: »One has to care about the thorns for the sake of the rose». Shah Ismail made so much... allowance for us... Babur rose. The time of meeting with shah's ambassador came. Mokhim-begim took her husband to the door.

Babur said loudly and briefly:

– "You should consider my sister a dear mother to all of us!"

Mokhim understood the hidden meaning of these words. Putting her hand to the chest she answered:

– "With all my soul... And I have a request to you, sovereign. Take care! Sometimes one can take poisonous arrows for the thrones." Babur promised with a feeling of tenderness and thankfulness broken out brightly to the wife and with gratitude for her penetration in his cares and fears:

– "Oh, don't worry! I know about it."

– "And he thought to himself: «I should spare neither gold nor other means in order to incline Ismail to an alliance. He and his ambassador should be taken by generosity!»

### III

The presents were really splendid: precious pearls, rubies from Badakhshan, the richest gold-brocaded dresses, blades of the best temper with gold handles, intricate luxuries. The cooks and the service staff of the kitchen lost the step during these two days and two nights preparing food for the feast which hadn't been in Kunduz up to now: more than eighty heads of fat-tailed sheep from Gissar were slaughtered. One couldn't count the number of ducks, partridges, and deers brought by the hunters of the mountains, steppes, forests and from the coastal riparian forests.

Babur's adviser, Mirza-khan, who was many times on various festivals in the number of his guests during his journeys, warned Babur:

– “Kizilbashes don’t consider the feast without wine as a feast. The first vizier Kasimbek couldn’t bear wine. And Babur himself didn’t drink except the case in Kabul when after the marriage with Mokhim tasted some dry wines.

Now from time to time an anxiety mingled with the joy in his heart - it seemed that his soul objected to such a complex game which he undertook, and he couldn’t do without this game. As he thought the source of his anxiety was Shah Ismail and discords of the Sunni and the Shia.

He wanted to lose contact with reality, to disperse this anxiety - at least for the time of the feast. And simply the master couldn’t help drinking, a little bit, if the guests were drinking.

An odorous and strong Maynob and many other wines - all that could be got in Kunduz - were brought to the palace.

Teenagers - royal carvers dressed up in brightly coloured man’s sleeveless jacket with pale yellow collars poured the wine into the gold and silver goblets. At first they brought it to Babur then in turn to the shah’s ambassador Vizier Muhammadjan sitting beside him and to Mirza-khan.

More than a hundred beks and other noble people participated at this feast. Many of them without being noticed by Babur and Kasimbek took to the bottle at former feasts of Babur, and now, the more reason there was - they exchanged naughty glances with each other holding a glass of wine in his hands and waited for the master’s sign. And Takhir sitting among minor beks cast a cautious glance at the silver glass every now and then as if it were an alive creature: it was unusual for him but he went on sipping.

Mirza-khan whispered to the ambassador, who was playing with his bushy adherent eyebrows:

– “Eminent guest, you are a witness of an unusual event - they are going to drink wine for the first time at Babur’s feast: what an excitement there is among the gathered people.”

The ambassador with an aquiline nose and a red beard looked over the dastarkhan<sup>213</sup> with an unconcealed interest shaking his huge turban where the sign of the scarlet crown stood in beauty, then he turned round and put his nenna dyed beard to Babur’s direction.

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<sup>213</sup> Dastarkhan – the name applied across Central Asia to the traditional space where food is eaten

Babur held the glass as if it were a bird ready to flutter out from his hands or to peck suddenly painfully. Everybody waited for Babur's words and he said the following words:

- "It's a custom left to us from our grandfathers and great grandfathers to drink the wine prepared from the pure grapes at the days of joy and among such respected guests. In our life there were still more sorrows than joy and we abstained from making the feasts with drinking of wine. The respectable beks know that the crown-bearing relatives' Mirza Badiuzzaman and Mirza Muzaffar treated us to maynob at the magnificent feasts organized in our honour in Herat but we abstained from it excusing ourselves, because the cares which burdened our soul then didn't let us give themselves up to the fun. But now, with God's permission, we have lived until the happy days the reason of which is the great Iranian shah Ismail's benevolence. Our eminent guest granted us the joy of the present day; let's drink the first cup to prove our infinite respect to shah Ismail and our friendliness to his wise ambassador - Vizier Muhammadjan!

Touched by these words, the ambassador raised and bowed low to Babur flashing with his eyes. Then he sat down and drank the glass to the dregs. The musicians began playing the merry melody «Sari navo». The ambassador said something in a low voice to the assistant sitting after him and the assistant made his way towards the lateral door taking a careful step and disappeared behind it. They finished playing «Sari navo» when the bek-kizilbash appeared again carrying an object covered with a white silk material on a gold tray.

Muhammadjan presented shah's gifts from gold and silver with the letter to Babur before the feast. «What else can be there?» - thought Babur and all the others stared at the tray with interest.

The musicians stopped playing; among the fallen silence bek-kizilbash approached Babur with this gift, bowed and stood in front of him. Muhammadjan raised:

- "The friend of Iran, great Sultan Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, by the words filled with deep respect to the imam of the world, sovereign-padishah<sup>214</sup> Ismail, is honoured with great confidence from him. And his symbol - a generous gift of the Padishah - let me present it to the master of this feast!"

The ambassador threw down the covering from the tray and everybody saw his white turban decorated with rubies and pearls.

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<sup>214</sup> Padishah - a superlative royal title

And of course, with a small image of the scarlet crown. The turban was wove – Babur estimated quickly by the number of creases - in twelve layers. It corresponded with the number of twelve holy Shia imams-shahids<sup>215</sup>. According to the Shia's faith every layer was a sacred haven for the spirit of an imam.

Babur turned red with the drunk wine, he felt some noise in his head, but his eyes being excited unnaturally noticed immediately the beks to become alerted and begin whispering with agitation among them. Babur saw Kasimbek and sheyh-ul-islam Khodja Caliph who was sitting at some distance to push back from the turban on the tray - they made it with some kind of indignation and even fear. Babur, Kasimbek and all their companions-in-arms were Sunni. They recognized all four first caliphs and that's why they wound the turban with four layers - the souls of these four caliphs inhabited there. The Shia try to find fault with three of them; their turbans with twelve layers glorify twelve imams fighting against Abu Bakr, Omar and Osman.

Old Kasimbek thought that all the Shia were the betrayers of the true faith. A delicate brilliance of the turban on the gold tray seemed to him to be the skin of a snake and sparkling of the rubies seemed to be its flame eyes filled with blood.

Vizier Muhammadjan bowed before Babur once more and asked him to accept and put this turban on his head, this holy gift sent to him personally by Shah Ismail.

«What will he do?» dozens of eyes fixed on Babur. Babur's sensitive ear caught Kasimbek's words. He whispered in confusion to Khodja Caliph:

– “Aren't they going to make us adopt the Shia's faith by slyness and insidiousness?”

And then - a moment passed – Kasimbek said to Babur in a low but distinct voice (the ambassador could hear it!):

– “Don't put it on, sovereign; I beg you, don't put it on!” The ambassador flinched.

Babur understood: he couldn't put the turban on - they would consider that he adopted Shiism. But wine gave him some more courage. Wine and common sense. In the long run both caliphs and twelve imams were real people who had lived many centuries ago for

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<sup>215</sup> Shahid – religious term in Islam, literally meaning “witness” but almost always means a “martyr”

Babur. Was it reasonable to continue this bloody hostility which separated them once? The bek-kizilbash kneeled and offered the tray with the turban to Babur. The shah's ambassador bowed once more.

This is Ismail stretching the hand of solidarity. And if Babur didn't take this hand... the Shaybani dynasty would conclude an alliance with the shah. The ways of his, Babur's, returning would close. He felt in his bones the aspiration for his motherland. He was ready to gnaw through the mountains, to drink all rivers on the way to it. Babur addressed to the ambassador:

– “The gift of the great shah of Iran is infinitely dear for us.” – And having been silent for a moment made a question suddenly: – “Our eminent guest Vizier Muhammadjan is the Imami, isn't he?”

– “Thanks to Allah - he is! Al hamdu lillah!” – The ambassador said the word of the oath from the Koran.

Babur addressed to Kasimbek:

– “And you, esteemed amir al umaro?”<sup>216</sup>

Kasimbek said the same word of the oath and added:

– “I wish four holy companions-in-arms of our prophet Muhammad were your invincible support, sovereign...”

The ambassador grew pale.

“Esteemed Vizier Muhammadjan!” – Babur hastened to continue.

– “It is written in the holy book: «Kulli muslimin ihvatun» - all Muslims must consider each other to be near, like brothers. We respect the views of musultan-imamiya and hope that you will respect our views as well!” – Babur stretched widely his both hands as if he embraced all his beks and close people. The ambassador mollified himself a little and entered this game. He nodded his head with approval.

– “This great shah's present is a symbol of his respect to all of you!”

Babur addressed to Kasimbek again:

– “We carry holy Ali in our soul, don't we? He is one of charyar<sup>217</sup>, isn't he?”

Kasimbek thought and agreed - one of four layers of the Sunni turban was the abode of Ali's spirit.

– “It's true, sovereign.”

– “Bibi Fatima, our Prophet Muhammad's only daughter, is holy for us, isn't she?”

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<sup>216</sup> Holy orders

<sup>217</sup> Charyar – first four Muslim caliphs

– “It’s true, sovereign!”

– “It means that if we honor the imams born by the holy Ali and Bibi Fatima we shan’t do any thing which doesn’t correspond with our faith, with our Muslim essence, shall we?”

At last Kasimbek realized what Babur was talking about; he also realized that he wouldn’t be able to make Babur refuse the intention to form an alliance with Ismail. Kasimbek himself knew how necessary this alliance for those who were with Babur was. If that was the case – the shah’s crafty present should be accepted, and Babur wanted to accept it not losing his dignity but in a sensible manner and maneuvering skillfully as a real soldier. Then Kasimbek felt the aspiration to defend Babur, to protect him against those who couldn’t understand him. Feeling his guilt he said, bending his head:

– “Sovereign, you are right; pardon your slave for ignorance!”

Babur looked at Kasimbek with approval: “I forgive you” – and then he addressed to the bek-kizilbash whose stretching hands holding the heavy tray with the turban were shaking with tiredness. Babur took with both hands the turban from the tray bravely with determination. A painful sigh escaped the beks.

– “It is shah Ismail’s gift – may Allah bless his right hand – we revere sacredly and apply to our eyes!” – Babur put the turban to his frontal bone and touched it with his forehead.

Muhammadjan’s face was radiant with joy:

– “Thank you very much, sovereign!”

But the grumble rose among beks, especially among the Mongolian beks, who roamed throughout Transoxiana and had joined Babur recently. One could hear both the voices of perplexity and of fury.

Kasimbek grew pale. And Muhammadjan said as if he managed to make Babur Shia (what a victory it was! How much the shah would appreciate his minister!):

– “Oh, mirza, we are sure that you will ascend the throne of Samarcand again with support of Shah Ismail. And then we hope to see this sacred turban on your blessed head!”

At last Babur heard the words which he waited for during all the time of the feast.

– “If by the will of God this happy day comes to us we will certainly put this turban on. You should tell it to Shah Ismail!”

The Mongolian beks began grumbling even more, but it played into Babur's hand: kizilbash's ambassador believed in his courage – Babur wouldn't take into consideration the most ardent "people of the Sunnah" for the forming of a lasting alliance with the shah.

The confidential relations that appeared after the feast between Babur and Muhammadjan simplified considerably the result of the negotiations. But they weren't easy. Having offered an alliance against Shaybani's epigones Ismail wanted his army to go to Mawarannakhr with Babur's army. It didn't suit Babur. Of course, he concealed the true reason of it from the shah's ambassador, he knew firmly: if he didn't achieve the victory without assistance his return to the mother land would be neither honorable nor durable. They shouldn't tell about him: "He returned having arrived at a gallop on Shah Ismail's staff of the spear".

Babur made the ambassador believe that shah's victory near Merv had already done more than half the work. Then the kizilbashes could have a rest. It was his turn to attack the epigones, to crush them. But the ambassador rejected this idea: kizilbashes craved to get Samarqand. Then Babur turned the negotiations to the other channel. Why not attack them from two sides independently? Babur's army was close to Gissar. But kizilbashes would have to make an additional detour many hundred milestones long through mountains and logs in order to reach Gissar. Why did they have to be tormented for nothing? Wouldn't it be better for Shah Ismail to start moving along the flat caravan road from Merv to the east through Termez and Shakhrisabz to Samarqand? Meanwhile Babur would cross the Pyandj and Vyahsh and attack the epigones in Gissar in order to open the way to Samarqand from the south.

At last he managed to persuade shah's ambassador. The military alliance was formed. Babur's plan underlay in it.

#### IV

Babur's main forces had been already concentrated at the north-west foot of the Hindu Kush. They were ready to attack in Gissar when on one of the last days of the spring Kasimbek knew that a conspiracy became ripe among those Mongolian beks who went over to them from Shaybani's camp. Twenty thousand soldiers went followed them. They were ready to make war almost permanently. They got used to being mercenaries. It almost became their method of existence, - and

if this or that sovereign paid for their services with much generosity and if this or that war could bring them more spoils, the majority of the Mongolian beks rushed immediately to this sovereign and to this war. They really went over to Babur's side having foreseen his victory, but hidden supporters of their former masters were among them. Moreover, after the fact that Babur took the Shia turban and put it to his eyes at the appointment of the shah's ambassador, fanatically aiming beks-Sunni made up their mind to rebel. They set rumors afloat that Babur betrayed three companions of the prophet and had already become a Shia himself, and now he wanted to turn all his soldiers into apostates.

Kambarali led a secret conspiracy. For the time being he concealed the fact that he was a deadly enemy to Babur because last year his younger brother, the participant of the other conspiracy, was put to death in Kabul. Kambarali gathered quite a number of people avid for Babur's overthrow. But they needed a person who belonged to a royal man who could sit on the throne instead of Babur. The eventual choice lied on Babur's seventeen-year-old foster child Said-khan. He was the son of Olachkhan, Babur's uncle. Kambarali began drawing this youth into his net but he turned out to be an honest person. Besides, he was sly – he didn't give away his relation to their malicious intent, he promised the Mongolian beks to think over their proposition and told this news about preparing conspiracy to Kasimbek.

Kasimbek told everything to Babur in private while they were going together along the foothills far away from other people. At first the news angered Babur:

– “Foul beks! How long will they stab me in the back? Remember – Ahmad Tanbal from Andijan is from the Mongols as well! Enough of that! Capture them! Quarter them and let the Egyptian vultures peck to pieces their remains!”

Kasimbek, stretching the reins of the horse, surveyed the slopes of the mountains. Thousands of yurts were scattered at their feet.

– “Sovereign, there are a lot of them. They have twenty thousand Novkers.”

– “All the Mongols conspire, didn't they?”

– “Not everybody, of course. Said-khan is from the Mongolian tribe as well but he showed a real loyalty to you. And thousands of Mongols are geared up well.”

– “We should rely on them, on the tribe and capture the conspirators-beks under the leadship of Kambarali...”

– “But Kambarali is the most authoritative. He has a great number of relatives among the beks. All of them are very revengeful. If we begin to suppress our enemies will we be able to launch a campaign against others? I hope our plans don’t fail.”

Kasimbek was right. If they began the investigation and punishment among the twenty thousand army, this work would be not only very difficult but even not very quick. They would miss the time for the campaign to Mavarannakhar; the ways of returning could be closed. But Babur went all length; he was ready for any risk in order to return to his motherland.

When Babur weighed the pros and cons the feeling of anger changed into the feeling of bitterness.

– “Treacherous! They knew where to hit me! The most mean treacheries come from the Mongols, similar to Kambarali. They act as if they defend morality, the purity of the faith!”

– “My sovereign, you are right, but... it’s impossible to treat the deceivers as in a fair fight... Your obedient servant thinks over other measures.”

– “What measures?”

– “Said-khan proved his devotion to you, didn’t he? He did. Conspirators, beks (there are ten of them lead by Kambarali) want to proclaim him to be the khan. Let him be their Novkers. “Said-khan is your sovereign, - we will tell them. – Take your Novkers and go with them to Andijan.” Andijan had already come over to our side. Let Said-khan go there and govern it on your behalf. We will rid of Kambarali!”

– “But if the others come over to the way of treachery?”

– “I doubt whether... But I’ll have a talk with the others myself. I’ll tell them that my intercession has saved them from Mirza Babur’s anger, but be careful. – I won’t intercede for you again... Well, just in case my people will watch the most suspicious ones. If the danger grows, I’ll have time to capture them...”

Babur gave a heavy sigh: he didn’t like the idea of sacrificing Said-khan, but he couldn’t find other more preferable measures.

At the beginning of the summer, Babur’s army (with the exception of those Mongolian detachments which went to Andijan with Said-khan after all) waded the river Pandj and poured to the valley of the Vakhsha.

The Sheybany's Dynasty knew that if they joined the kizilbashes going from the side of Termez they would lose the case. Having remained a part of their forces at the head of Ubaydulla Sultan in Karshi and Samarqand, Babur's opponents gathered their main forces in Gissar. The thirty thousand cavalry lead by Timur Sultan, Djanibek Sultan, Khamza Sultan and Makhdi Sultan passed quickly the steppes and began climbing the mountains, about to prevent Babur's crossing over the Vakhsha.

But going down from the mountains by leaps and bounds Babur reached the banks of the Vakhsha earlier than his opponents and succeeded to cross the bridge Puli Sangin. His warriors seized profitable positions on cliffs guarding the entrances to the gorge. The army of sultan-inhabitants of the steppe, having approached the gorge and not venturing to sag in it, stopped.

Babur saw from above the sultans not dismounting from the horses to discuss, to argue for a long time. Then ten thousand parts under Timur Sultan's signs and colours went to the right from the entrance to the gorge. To all appearances they decided to make a flanking turning movement of the heights occupied by Babur. It was an original tulgama (Tulgama is a military term which means attack of the flank/rear of the opponent combining with a swift attack on the forehead.). But the mountains are not the Saripul valley. Ten thousand lead by Mirza-khan were directed at capturing of Timur Sultan's ten thousand troop. Moving along the straight line they should pass ahead of those who were doing a circular motion: Mirza-khan reached the marked place faster than the Shaybanids and succeeded to take all the important weight before their coming. Timur Sultan was climbing obstinately into the breach through narrow paths leading to the top and straight through cliffs; he fought bravely but without any result up to the midday: stones and hail of arrows from above canceled his intention to make a tulgama.

Timur Sultan's Novkers, used to fighting in an open space, weren't be able to act as harmoniously fast and bravely as usual in this narrow gorge among cliffs. Dead and wounded horses fell from steep slopes, dead and wounded Novkers rolled down. Alive Novkers fell down as well – they were strong but surprised by unequal conditions of the fight. One of them was caught and brought to Babur. Having interrogated the captive, they knew that the most talented person,

Ubaydulla Sultan, wasn't among Sheybanids. The others – after the tulgama was ruined – didn't know how to continue the battle.

Babur knew that the water was far from the low place, where the enemies flocked then. Meanwhile, the heat became stronger. It was clear that soon people and horses would find the water which was at two or three milestones from the entrance of the gorge.

The night fell. The sun began setting. Babur dismounted from the horse. About a thousand nukers standing visible from their height dismounted intentionally as well.

So, the fight was postponed until tomorrow morning?

The sultans decided so: they saw from below what Babur did. But they couldn't see Babur's detachments in the hidden folds of the gorge which were ready to rush in battle.

The sultans ordered the army to prepare for rest and overnight stay. It was the fatal order. The ranks fell apart. Many nukers went back along the road to the water.

– “Everybody, go ahead! Faster, faster!” – Babur cried. – “The enemy is drawing back! Catch up with it; beat it until he forms up the rows again.”

Twelve thousand of the horsed flew out by several waves from the gorge. Three thousand detachments rushed from above – Babur, having bared his saber, galloped ahead it together with his flag-bearers...

It was a panic-stricken flight of the enemies. Their army was falling apart. Timur Sultan being afraid of being surrounded rushed to the other distant gorge; it was getting dark when Muhammed Dulday, having killed many nukers of Khamza Sultan approached him and captured him. Before midnight, nukers led by Khodja Kalon captured Mahdi Sultan alive.

Sultans of Shaybani were blamed for mass destruction of the population of Karakul and Andijan. Babur ordered to behead them.

Silver gossamer flies in the limpid sky with strings of its tender white silk. Pomegranates and the sweetest apples, «naksh»<sup>218</sup>, have ripened in the garden; an excellent grape «sahibi»<sup>219</sup> stands in beauty, a ripe, on the vines. Autumn, wonderful autumn of Samarqand!

All gates of the great town opened, an entry and exit are free. It is already ten days since there are neither forces nor authorities in

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<sup>218</sup> sort of apples

<sup>219</sup> sort of grapes

Samarqand. The supporters of Sheybani<sup>220</sup>, suffered a defeat on the bank of Vahsha<sup>221</sup>, but tried to gather their forces again to fight with Babur in the neighborhoods of Guzar and Qarshi. But as it was known still thirty thousand nukers<sup>222</sup> came under Babur's command, sent by Shah Ismail, and sultans retreated to the steppes, leaving Qarshi, Bukhara, Samarqand, carried out drifts along, plundered everywhere as many seeds as possible. Mavaraunnahr's<sup>223</sup> farmers, who bled white for the period of this long war and hated nomadic sultans and beks, waited Babur as deliverer.

Babur<sup>224</sup> together with allies, who hurried to unite with him, went to Samarqand now not from the south but from the northeast, and occupied Qarshi and Bukhara beforehand.

Twenty of the most powerful persons of Samarqand with keys from fortress-Arch<sup>225</sup> and rich gifts met Babur not far from the town. Both sides of the road, going to the gates of Chorrah, were crowded by people. But everywhere in the very town were hung out beautiful rugs, carpets, syuzane<sup>226</sup>, everywhere was a joyful animation, on roofs and above gates perched karnay<sup>227</sup> and surnay<sup>228</sup> musicians: what's a holiday in Samarqand without music! People of Samarqand had already written poetry, glorifying Babur's victory in Gissar and his arrival to Samarqand. Some lines, written on white silk clothes, were flying along the streets above benches and before the arch. Babur didn't expect that he would be met with such honour in his native town, which he once left being abased and insulted. Riding by a main street to the palace Kok-Sarai<sup>229</sup> in hue-and-cry of triumphant square Registan where his favourite Ulugbek madrasah was standing in beauty, he was gripped by an involuntary shiver and tears welled into his eyes. As in the old times, as if childlike looked at riding Kasimbek, as usual near, he said:

– “I can hardly believe. Is everything in my dream or in reality?”

– “In reality, sovereign! In reality!”

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<sup>220</sup> the dynasty which reigned in XVI in Bukhara

<sup>221</sup> a river in Tajikistan

<sup>222</sup> man-at-arms in the service of the feudal aristocracy or the ruler

<sup>223</sup> ( arab.: that is over the river) the medieval names of regions on the right bank of Amu Darya

<sup>224</sup> Lion

<sup>225</sup> the fortress, citadel, reinforced part of the town, where is situated a palace of the ruler

<sup>226</sup> sort of tapestry made of a plain material with embroidery

<sup>227</sup> a wind musical instrument in a form of a long copper pipe.

<sup>228</sup> a folk wind musical instrument reminiscent of a flute

<sup>229</sup>a blue palace

Behind Babur's guards, beks of kizilbashi<sup>230</sup> pranced in puffy turbans with scarlet signs: Ahmadbek Sufi-ogli, Shaxruhbek Afshar, Vizier Muhammadjan and others. It is clear to read arrogance on their faces: "If it were not for us, Babur wouldn't see Samarqand!"

People of Samarqand are glad of deliverance from Sheybanids' sultans. But when kizilbashi ride past, the drums, karnay and surnay instruments stop at once. Let them know: not Shiites<sup>231</sup> but Babur is met!

About kizilbashi's cruelty, that they convert many people to Shiites by force, the terrible rumors are afloat over Samarqand, both in Qarshi and in Bukhara.

Sunnites' population looked at the strong, many thousands alien army with anxiety and hostility. Beks-kizilbashi feels this coldness; honour and respect shown to Babur annoys them. So it was in Karshi, in Bukhara and now in Samarqand.

Babur tried to stir up emotions of hospitality at his compatriots, he ordered his town criers to announce on urban squares and streets: "Noble warriors of Shah Ismail – our dear guests!" In Samarqand in honour of victory over sheybanids, Babur pushed the boat out for population and guests for three days.

Ten years ago, when Sheybani kept the town in the siege, Babur, his family, all his people bore famine there. Now in the palace Bustan-Sarai<sup>232</sup>, in all mahallas<sup>233</sup>, on crowded crossroads with teahouses and shops, in gardens and proms bakes at rack and manger flat cakes of every sorts and kinds; on thousands of trays carried an aromatic pillows: thousands of sheep died under the cooks' knives, who cooked kavurdak<sup>234</sup>, kebab, shurpa<sup>235</sup>; the biggest pitchers were opened, filled of the elegant wines.

Everything is for the people of Samarqand, native and true people of Samarqand, all for kizilbashi – firm in the battle and, most probably, in the friendship. It comes time of wonderful news (Tashkent, Sayram, Osh, Uzgen take Babur's side); it is time of wine

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<sup>230</sup> "read heads"; a guard of Iranian shahs, most of all from warriors – Turkmen and other Turkic nations; broadly kizilbashi are also named all warriors of shah; Originally they are named for the bright red sign on their turbans, symbolized for Shiites the blood of their imams

<sup>231</sup> a main movement in Islam

<sup>232</sup> a palace – garden

<sup>233</sup> a block

<sup>234</sup> the roast (meat)

<sup>235</sup> a broth, a soup, mainly potato

and fruit of autumn! It seemed to Babur that the same golden age began, when all his dreams and desires must come true at their best.

The vast yard of the white marble cathedral mosque, paved by plain stones, hummed with the voices and steps of large numbers of people, gathering here. Many people of Samarqand would like to hear by their own ears how will be read the xutba – sermon. Today is Friday, the most important day of the Muslim week and the most important Friday xutba<sup>236</sup>.

Vagueness is in the minds of citizens. Rumors are afloat: «Mirza Babur went over to Shiites, he turned his back on sacred caliphs, admitted twelve imams!» People, who met Babur with hope, didn't believe these rumors, but the enemies tried with all their strength, they agitated the people. Today everything will be clear, according to canon, xutba must be read with adding names either of four caliphs or twelve imams.

The inner space of big mosque and its yard is overcrowded. Armed guards stood in order to avoid crushing at the exit to the yard and at the doors of the mosque. An order: don't let anyone else pass.

Finally sheikh-ul-islam<sup>237</sup> Khoja Halifa, Babur, Kasimbek and commanding group of kizilbashi came through the back gate to the mosque. At the sight of countless crowds of parishioners Babur's heart beat anxiously. Will all of these people understand that the risk, which he took, is necessary, the game, which he organized, is the matter temporary or forced?

It is not easy to feed "dear guests", thirty thousand kizilbashi (it is necessary to find food for sixty thousands of horses every day). Fertile autumn was coming to an end. Stores were plundered by sultans-inhabitants of steppe regions, though and treasury. The prices were increased in bazaars. The theft is needed just now! But how is it possible to thrift when it is necessary to rub kizilbashi up the right way? The only thing to do: feed and shower praise, you say both you are good and your relatives – and quickly try to send them to go home. However according to the tentative agreement, it will have to proclaim shah Ismail as the high ruler, to read xutba corresponding with the names of shah and twelve imams, after that to mint coins with an image of Ismail, and then beks of kizilbashi must withdraw their forces from Mavaranakhr

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<sup>236</sup> a sermon of imam in the mosque on Fridays and feasts

<sup>237</sup>a chief of clergy in the states of Central Asia.

Instead of coming to ruin, keeping gratis thirty thousand mouths of kizilbashi, it'd better to fulfill all of these conditions for the sign and get rid of the spongers – Kasimbek and other Babur's nearest comrades-in-arms understood it. And Khoja Halifa agreed to read today's xutba as Babur waited that. But in order not to provoke a very angry fit of parishioners of Samarqand, it was decided that and four caliphs though without calling of their names would mention even if in general form, and the names of twelve imams would have to be pronounced expressively-distinctly.

Honorable, beard till the navel, sheikh-ul-islam Khoja Halifa, Babur's confidant, at first read before the parishioners the usual Friday namaz, then, taking into his arm the staff, slowly went upstairs on marble steps to the eminence in the mosque's deep – the moment of the beginning of xutba came.

Twelve thousand people in four-layer turbans held their breath. Kizilbashi's ambassador, wise Vizier Muhammadjan turned his eyes from this sea of Sunni turbans with irritation to the turban of Khoja Halifa. Cunning person! You can see that he has made more than four layers, however not twelve. But how many they are exactly - you can't count. Both Babur's turban and Kasimbek's turban are the same. Muhammadjan was really alarmed: won't Babur shirk his promise given in Kunduz?

Muhammadjan began to keep an eye on Khoja Xalifa.

Then at last was heard the bass of sheikh-ul-islam, trembling slightly, hoarsely – anxious:

– “Bismilla-hi, rahmomu-ar-raxim!<sup>238</sup>”

During all xutba Khoja Halifa felt his flesh fixing thousand of people's eyes on him.

His knees gave away but he tried to stand firmly and straightly... Praising to Allah and praising to Prophet were pronounced ...Now the turn for praising of charyars – four first caliphs. Doesn't he, Khoja Halifa sheikh-ul-islam, well-brought-up and bringing up to the spirit of the great devotion to charyars, now turn to dust the hopes of so many parishioners? Before him, Khoja<sup>239</sup> Halifa, are standing twenty thousands men in Sunnite turbans. Khoja Halifa believes from

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<sup>238</sup> the prayer praising of God

<sup>239</sup> the descendant one of four Muslim caliphs; it is added to masculine names, making the shade of respect

childhood that the spirits of charyars<sup>240</sup> live in every four-layer turbans, and by movement of these turbans in a moment it seems to Khoja that it's they who call upon him, demand the respect to themselves and threaten to punish and deprive of the mind if he dares, if he only dares... No, Khoja Halifa is afraid of these spirits.

– “Immortal charyars – Saint Abu-Bekr! Saint Omar! Saint Osman!” – Khoja Halifa began to pronounce the names, which he mustn’t pronounce.

Babur felt as if the wind slid on his face! - as thousands of parishioners gave a joyful, relief sigh. Vizier Muhammadjan blanched. Shahruhbek Afshar seized by the handle of the sable, tossed to the eminence where were commemorated hated by kizilbashi the names of caliphs, who had left this life long ago. They hated them as if these caliphs were today's, alive enemies, they were ready to kill everyone who glorified their names in the mosque. Babur heard that in the cathedral mosque of Herat on parishioner's eyes kizilbashi killed with a sword sheikh<sup>241</sup> Zayniddin, who had done the same thing as Khoja Halifa now.

Having caught Shahruhbek by hand, Babur pleadingly whispered:

– “Venerable! Arm yourself with patience, patience!”

While Khoja Halifa began to enumerate by name the imams:

– “Saint Imam Khasan! Saint Imam Xusayn! Saint Zaynaliddin Ali!”

Shahruhbek Afshar took a step back, removed his hand from the sword hilt. But among twenty thousand believers-Sunnites<sup>242</sup> raised such a hubbub that Khoja Halifa in order to be heard, began to scream out the names. There was heard loud from the crowd:

– “Oh, come off it! Come off it!”

A nuker of a large height, one of those who were on the safe side in a queue, quickly stopped the noisy guy's mouth by his big palm and drug him outside.

When sheikh-ul-islam, having finished the enumeration of imams, began to laud the world imam, the great sheikh of Iran Ismail Sefevi, the continuer of the sacred affair of twelve, everywhere both inner and outside mosque space as if noisy nervous waves started

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<sup>240</sup> four first Muslim caliphs

<sup>241</sup> a spiritual advisor

<sup>242</sup> a main movement in Islam

moving. They calmed a little down when Khoja Halifa proclaimed Babur "the sovereign of Mavarannahr".

After xutba, it could be heard as other parishioners noticed with pride:

– "Mirza Babur is a true sovereign of Mavarannahr. He didn't give his throne to the foreigner!"

But there were quite a lot who complained:

– "Babur mixed our pure faith with Rafidah!<sup>243</sup> They defiled the faith! We will incur charyar's displeasure now! High cost of living will be again! Famine will begin again!"

Babur wanted to send his "dear guests" back to Iran as quick as possible. Once he still appeared on the throne in the same twelve-layer turban, which sheikh Ismail donated. And he coined several thousand tanga with the image of Ismail. This money he paid to kizilbashi.

In the cities and kishlaks provocative rumors were spread rapidly. They say that the end of the world just on the point of coming and disgusting creatures Gog and Magog which is spoken in old legends of, have already been here and have taken an appearance of kizilbashi. They say when Babur in a Shiite turban had risen to Kuktash, the edge of this sacred rock picked off. They were frightened that when shah Ismail arrived to Samarqand and rose to Kuktash, it would begin the end of the world.

Babur by his apparent indifference to the faith questions (and independent in matters of the state!) antagonized mullahs and sheikhs, many of them secretly and obviously worked in favour of «caliph» Sheybani and his continuers. That is their people spread ridiculous gossips over bazaars trying to rouse hostility still more between Shiites and Sunnites. And the rise in costs these people blamed on Shiites too.

The Samarqand market day is in high gear. It's a throng of people and boiled of passions. Five Iranian nukers wanted to buy Samarqand atlas, being iridescent. They came into the store and ordered a stout, dressed in shirt with open at the neck trader to cut the silk approximately on four clothes.

The trader took into his hand a wooden arshin and looking at nukers-kizilbashi mockingly asked:

– "What coins do you have? Just show."

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<sup>243</sup> a sect in Islam; sectarians, passed from Sunnites to Shiites

A warrior in a big fur-cap brought out of the leather purse three-four gold coins, showed from a distance and twizzled before the trader. He could see in obverse the image of Shah Ismail, but in reverse the incuse names of Shiites-imams. He was frightened and began to wave by hands. He heard the words of mullah in his mahalla: "Shiite's money is dirty, one who takes them, will be damned by charyars". His comrades told him: "Actual gold is next to nothing in these coins".

Kizilbash looked at real coins on his palm, then at silk trader with surprise.

- "What's the matter? What is wrong with this akcha<sup>244</sup>?"
- "This tanga<sup>245</sup> isn't in great demand here. Nobody takes them."
- "Why? Why not?" - Kizilbash asked, flied in a passion.
- "Don't take so there!"

Somebody with a barefaced look who stood at the doors to the shop, he replied:

- "Strangers' money is dirty!"
- "Dirty?" - Nuker-kizilbash turned sharply and rushed to the talker, catching at sabre, but he vanished without a trace in the crowd. But somebody threw stone at the nuker from a crowd and somebody else screamed out:
- "Rafidahs – traitors of faith – get out!"

The nukers drew the arms. The customer's comrade asked sternly to the trader:

- "Don't you take our akcha?"

The serious anger and the trader changed his tune. He said more gently:

- "If I take, I'll be ruined, try to understand me, dear guest. It is used to trade in old money here."
- "In old? Does it mean that you need Sheybanikhan's akcha?"

It was so. First of all, there were charyars' names on those tanga. But what is more, Sheybanikhan's tanga were heavier.

Sheybani-khan carried out, we would say, a currency reform on the territory of all his provinces, stretching from Herat till Tashkent. And this poor trader remembered how the weight of the gold tanga under Sheybani rather rose than under Timurids' descendants for the

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<sup>244</sup> the money

<sup>245</sup> unit of money

whole dang<sup>246</sup>. That's why in all Khurasan and Mavarannahr bazaars the demand for Sheybanikhan's tanga was higher than different coin. But the trader couldn't say frankly about it to an incensed nuker, he only remarked:

– “Sheybani-khan is no more, he is dead.”

And somebody screamed out again from behind in the doorway to the shop:

– “Hey, the stranger, release Samarcand from your presence”, - and threw a lump of big clay at the kizilbashi.

The lump hit him in the cap, having crumbled and splashed all over with dust his face. In the crowd all began to laugh. The nuker unsheathed his curved sabre and tried to catch sight of one who had thrown the lump. Not having found him, he turned again to the thick trader. Raising his voice at the end of the phrase – the nuker seemed to be from Tebriz, -asked loudly:

– “You don't take the akcha, do you? Shah Ismail's akcha, isn't it?”

– “Take – woe will be me – valiant...”

– “Don't take, right?”, – And kizilbashi sharply with a raise, struck the trader with the sabre, having cut him from the shoulder almost to the very navel. The other kizilbashi immediately chopped off the dead body's head at one stroke, then strangely sat down in the counter. The blood gushed out on silks. The witnesses of the crowd, who were standing in the first row, first of all stood paralyzed, frozen for a moment then with howls of fear on their lips rushed away and the crowd disappeared.

But “dear guests” after this incident went into open robbery...

The animosity of Sunnites and Shiites more often led to bloody conflicts. The anxiety seized at last and beks-kizilbashi, not quite calmed by Babur's assurances that he abided by his agreement, signed with shah Ismail, but frightened by the scope of the population's hate toward them. Powerful beks were presented by expensive things, swift-footed horses, silver and gold dishes, money and at the end of winter the thirty-thousandth army of kizilbashi moved from Mavarannahr to Iran.

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<sup>246</sup> unit of money

After that more or less quiet life came to normal in Samarqand. New taxes, essentially from new vilayats<sup>247</sup>, replenished treasury, ruined by Sheybanids and keeping of kizilbashi.

Babur could take a short rest now, gave himself up to solemnities and favourite plans.

Once in spring, when the white-pink pack of almond groves was pleasing to the eyes, Babur with the group of close ones went on a hike to Ulugbek's observatory.

Takhir led the bodyguards on a bay horse with bald-faced. Kasimbek and Khoja Kalonbek rode astride from Babur, chosen a favourite white warhorse for a walk. Having dropped behind them a little, thoughtful Mavlayana<sup>248</sup> Fazliddin sat on a black horse; he came from Herat a week ago. Among noble beks was almost lost a puny figure of scribe-mudarris<sup>249</sup>, managed by school and madrasah<sup>250</sup> affairs.

Horsemen, not having reached to Obi Rahmat channel, turned aside of Bogi-Maydan the most well-organized and famous garden in Mavarannahr in the days of Babur; and fifteen years ago this garden was more beautiful but after, under Sheybani stayed unattended, the water stopped to come to channels and many trees withered. The roof of double-level Porcelain Palace situated in the garden – famous by its columns and paintings on the porcelain of Chinni-hona - began to leak and many wonderful pictures were spoiled.

Babur with sorrow in his soul addressed to the architect:

– “Mavlyana Fazliddin, we called you from Herat with the hope first of all to charge the building of new palaces in the city and in the country gardens. But look, in what poor state the old buildings are, famous all over the world.”

– “The Sovereign, the whole world knows about Mirza Ulugbek observatory and it is as abandoned as Chinni-xona.” – Mavlyana Fazliddin lifted his hands – “Yesterday I saw it for the first time but my heart still aches. But what would have been expected? The observatory had already been left unattended for sixty years. The ornamented tiles were stripped off the walls; marble blocks were

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<sup>247</sup> a unit of administrative division; a province, a region

<sup>248</sup> historical: our master; a title of Muslim of Divines and scholars

<sup>249</sup> an advisor, a teacher of madrasah

<sup>250</sup> Muslim seminary

taken out from the wall laying. If it comes like this, there will be ruins from this big building."

– "It cannot be allowed! Dear Kasimbek, place at Mavlyana Fazliddin's disposal all necessary means and sufficient number of people. The observatory and Porcelain Palace – a memory of our great predecessor Mirza Ulugbek - they need to bring into a normal state."

– "The Sovereign, I will set to the fulfillment of your order with great pleasure. Porcelain Palace will be in its previous magnificence. This work is not so difficult. Clean the channels in the garden, turn on water, plant the flowers and seedlings of trees."

– "Can we make it by Navruz<sup>251</sup>?" – Babur smiled, – "Won't we celebrate Navruz in Porcelain Palace this year, dear Kasimbek?"

Khoja Kalonbek, always favorable for different celebrations, smiled joyfully:

– "You have told a wise thought, the Sovereign! Masters and gardeners are enough in Samarqand. Mavlyana Fazliddin will lead by all and he will beautify the garden till Navruz then make merry..."

Fazliddin put his hand to the chest:

– "Chinna-xona can be restored, but what is to be done with the observatory, the Sovereign?"

– "Restore, Restore ...Mr. Kasimbek, how and when can it set?" – Babur asked.

Kasimbek was afraid of setting to the observatory. For some time people of Samarqand, at least many of them, were proud of Rasad-xona (the observatory) of Ulugbek. Fanatic-sheikhs then damned it but after Ulugbek, constantly speaking about it as the refuge of apostates and damning in every way, could persuade in it a lot of believers. Babur will be got on the wrong side of sheikhs and mullahs more over by reconstruction of the observatory and dark forces which ruined Ulugbek can make an attempt on his life.

Kasimbek dared to make the objection:

– "My Sovereign, is it worth hurrying to step on a sleeping snake's tail? If we reconstruct Rasad-xona where can we take great scholars who will give themselves up wise studies there? Sixty years have passed since Mirza Ulugbek, none of the scholars of those years are alive, but new scholars departed into other countries."

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<sup>251</sup> New Year, which concurs with the day of spring equinox – 22d of March

– “They can call, dear vizier”, – Babur frowned. His strong-willed nature had to begin the going immediately, though the first steps. – “Hey, munshi<sup>252</sup>! Write the letters to scholars on our behalf.”

The scribe immediately took out of its bosom an exercise-book and a pen. Babur read, the scribe stood and wrote down.

– “The scholars who study science of stars which created our great predecessor Mirza Ulugbek, wherever they are in Herat or in Turkish, Tebriz, should invite to arrive to Samarqand on our behalf. For ... inform about it and through heralds ... we will intend to open again Rasad-xona and if some scholars can continue the great matter of Mirza Ulugbek, he will be provided with all necessary for it: we will take all traveling expenses, they won’t complain of dwelling and salary. We entrust you, dear munshi, with the sending of proper letters-calls with our envoys...”

Under the direction of Mavlyana Fazliddin the destroyed channels were cleared and reconstructed in the garden Bogi-Maydan, the withered trees were grubbed and planted new one and rich flower gardens were expanded. Reviving Porcelain Palace Fazliddin didn’t meet difficulties; - paying off fairly and generously, one could find painters and masons, gardeners and navvies who did their work honestly and tirelessly. But charge the work within the walls of the observatory, generating majestic three-level hoop, turned very difficult. From under staircase-semicircles the yawning abyss went down, at the bottom of which the remains of sextant arch gleamed – the large instrument whose purpose for dark people had no idea. And as soon as workmen-masons had found themselves on an edge, they began to shiver as if hell broke loose before them. Sheikhs and mullahs repeated that this room was the refuge of the devildom and one who would go in the building, he became devil’s sacrifice. Sheikhs from the Naqshbandiya order used especially strong and active influence, the main persons responsible for closing many schools and madrasah in Samarqand after Ulugbek.

In spite of it Fazliddin at first managed to employ for a good pay sixty masters and workers and set to reconstruction of the observatory with them. The woods rose for repair of walls and ceilings of second and third growth. The crowds of wandering dervishes right then began to rummage around Rasad-xona, entirely under the command of naqshbandiya sheikhs. In full view of workers,

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<sup>252</sup> a scribe, a clerk

they formed the circle, gave themselves up to zeals screaming out all together: « You are a friend of truth, oh Allah! », « You are a friend of truth, oh Allah! », sang poetry and songs, quite often composed skillfully, in which they predicted that the wrath of God inevitably would punish those who gave up charyars, who called their existence in a question as masters of destinies all things. Among dervishes were surely secret people of sheybanids.

They were among the builders too. One of these people applied for work to carry the bricks. And after a while he « accidentally » pushed off high forests the most skilful, brave master devoted to Babur – master by ornamented tiles. The master fell from the third growth on a heap of stones below and dropped to his death.

Dervishes rejoiced! Forgotten all over the place they shouted in ecstasy, forgetful and furious: « The wrath of God punished him! Spirits punished him! Glory to righteous Allah! You are a friend of truth, oh Allah! ».

Masters and workers left the observatory, nothing reconstructed in it. Mavlyana Fazliddin would intend to employ others, not so great skill, as he'd liked; he went on bazaars to the unemployed, but more than the unemployed there were rumors: « Money, earned in Rasad-xona are dirty! The person who believes it is dangerous to be there, he will be killed by spirits of holy caliphs ». As soon as Fazliddin had mentioned about the work in the observatory, people fear him as the devil hates holy water...

But Bustan-Sarai celebrated with feasting!

For example, in honor of beks and noble people of Urgench and Karakul who came to Babur with expensive gifts? Babur sent there authorized people a month ago and that these towns, having came over to his side without striking, send in answer their beks, made happy a lot « the unifier of Mavarannahr » (so he mentally named himself and was proud when he heard this nickname from the mouth of others). Populous feasts, lavish libations, for the first time beginning in Kunduz, became more and more frequent in honour of successes and then regardless of them. They feasted by turns, first at one, then at other beks, who emulated each other for the part of drinking wine.

Kasimbek reminded Babur again and again that it wasn't so quiet within the country, quite many enemies were whetting their daggers under the counter, but in northern steppes the epigones of

Sheybani, not wasting time, had been going to repay for the defeat. The wrestle goes for life or death...

In answer to it Babur liked to read aloud the quatrain from his gazelle, written in elated mood:

*Time of dates and friends – that is spring.  
Tune of poetry, time of love, fire of wine in the blood.  
And who once, could learn all of it at once,  
That happiness tasted, all got what's coming to him*

To words from gazelle, was written the melody; gazelle was often played and was sung on feasts.

Sometimes Babur, although got a bit on, spoke about more serious matters, though alike remote from the preparation for the future battles:

– “Respectable Chief vizier! Do you hear that in Samarcand’s schools were taught on the alphabet invented by me, and more quickly then before, became literate? You can ask even if this honorable mudarris...”

Mudarris at whom the turban on his head and the full glass of wine in his hand confirmed without delay:

– “Respectable Chief vizier, wonderful Hatti Baburi will become the means truly healing in deliverance our people from illness of stagnation and ignorance! The Arabic alphabet – The Koran alphabet - for us, of course, is sacred but you must admit that thousands of these signs over the line, under the line very complicate reading and writing mastery. But Hatti Baburi deprive of these sophistications, it is easy to master it.”

Kasimbek knew that the alphabet letters were invented by Babur in Kabul three years ago, by their inscription reminded the ancient Turkic script letters, patterns of which were found in Singak on the bank of Amu Darya. The sheikhs didn’t admit anything pre-Islamic and if the patterns of the Old Turkic script were discovered they would be destroyed at once. Babur considered such an attitude to antiquity for the wildness and spoke openly that the script bore no relation to the questions of faith and Koran was the Scripture of the Prophet Muhammad because it convinced of the meaning of divine revelations contained in it but not exactly the holiness of letters by

whom they were written down. That's why he invented the script, relied on both The Arabic and The Old Turkic alphabet.

Kasimbek couldn't and didn't like to speak about such difficult and delicate things. An old hand, he in two days after describing conversation brought to Babur to «the refuge of solitude» Mavlyana Fazliddin and mudarris, who spread Hatti Baburi.

The master felt at once that all three men were worried by something; he ordered to tell only exact truth.

– “The Sovereign, the worst has happened”, - the pallor didn't come off mudarris's face. – “A teacher who had opened the school and taught in it by Hatti Baburi was killed by illiterates. He was pelted with stones.”

– “Killed?” – Babur instantly flew into a rage. – “What wildness! Kasimbek, what is it, the beginning of the riot? – All of you fall asleep, oversleep?”

– “The Sovereign, I reported you a lot of time that sheiks - naqshbandiya everywhere muddied the waters, rose people against us. Dervishes nearly stirred up unrests, when in Rasad-xona the master fell and dropped to his death. In the mosques of mullah somebody casts aspersions on you, speaking: “Hatti Baburi was created by none other than the leader of Shiites Shah Ismail, whom Babur submitted to.” Rumors spread all over the town, the acts, as we can see, follow for words.”

– “Why don't you immediately tell to catch the troublemakers, the disseminators of false rumors? And why drop on Shah Ismail?” – Babur looked over his closes, as if making complaints, - “but he even hardly knows Hatti Baburi.”

Quick changes of the mood became at Babur often and often. Kasimbek answered his question indirectly:

– “Khoja Halifa from mimbar<sup>253</sup> in cathedral mosque had tried to tell about it, but the crowd pushed him away from there with shouts « It's a lie! It's a rotten alphabet of apostates, let Allah punish you! » Somebody had already cried, that he sold himself to sheikh-ul Islam's Shiites. If Takhirbek didn't stand up, who knows, one could kill sheikh-ul-islam.”

And at last Kasimbek gave a straight-out answer on Babur's angry question: – “Sovereign! We caught about twenty people of

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<sup>253</sup> the eminence in the mosque from which imam pronounced his sermon

layers, but after we had known that the mullahs stirred them up, whom one cannot touch; they are the descendants of Khoja Axrar."

Well, we can't touch them. To touch the descendant's of Khoja Axrar – Babur understood it – it means to bring the torch to dry twigs, which is ready to blaze up from only one spark.

– "It's also bad in the army, my Sovereign", – continued Kasimbek pitiless, – "It's a half-starved spring. The prices very increased. The old coins came to the end at nukers, our new are taken in bazaars with reluctance. If somebody pays with the help of them, the price will be risen. Both beks and nukers demand the pay rise. But if we give them a raise there won't be money in the treasury."

– "What is to be done, Kasimbek?" – Babur's voice sounded in depression.

– "I offer, Sovereign, to think all together, immediately to call beks on a big council, to shake them... and to rouse ourselves."

– "I know what it means, – "to shake" and "to rouse ourselves". Beks are obsessed with a desire of revenge to sultans, scouring in the steppes. Our beks were again on the warpath. Yes, why not? New vilayats are a new prey both beks and nukers. They stay too long in Samarqand; their sabres are out for a new blood!"

– "But, my Sovereign, the craft of a warrior is war... All the more our enemies – sultans – became stronger again... The ten thousandth army of Ubaydulla Sultan from northern steppe goes to Bukhara..." – Kasimbek moved forward to Babur. – "And sheikhs in Samarqand knew about all of it, the Sovereign. The danger from without and the danger from within tied up with one rope... Now it is not the time to think of anything else except war, we need the victorious march as never before, the Sovereign."

Babur looked away from vizier, turned to Fazliddin and mudarris:

– "Respectable people! The fate wants to throw us again to the nets of difficult circumstances and concerns. We will have to delay the actions of enlightenment and construction, to stop the teaching in schools by Hatti Baburi... And we will reconstruct Rasad-xona later... Now it is not the time to think of anything else except war." – he repeated Kasimbek's words bitterly.

Having heard that Babur came from Samarqand with thirty thousand nukers, Ubaydulla Sultan turned to the desert. Babur's army was situated near Bukhara, waiting the returning of the enemy from a

poor desert in April to the places where one can feed both warriors and horses. How many times he could be waited furthermore having triple numerical superiority? And Babur made his mind to send his army into the depths of the sand dunes. It was exactly what Ubaydulla Sultan needed!

The part of Babur's army - devoted highlanders could successfully fight in the mountains, in the desert among quick sands, their horses moved slowly. The bullock cart with guns stuck in the sand; the army stretched out by a long string. And here the betrayal had happened: ten thousand Mongols lost contact with all mass and quickly went to the deserts towards guide-signalmen of Ubaydulla Sultan.

The discord between Shiites and Sunnites strengthened the ferment among them who went with Babur from Samarqand and Bukhara and among the rest of smith-Mongols. The scouts, having been sent by sheikh - naqshbandiya, could disarm a lot of nukers beforehand, persuaded them that Babur was faced with apostates and now the prophet and choryars would give preference to them who preserved Sunnite's spirit in purity. Babur would be sure to suffer a defeat.

Ubaydulla Sultan conducted a deep covering maneuver all over the sands up to an inch known to him, and in the area between Hyrabad and Karakul near the lake Kuli-Malik he charged at Babur, who had already lost control over all of his detachments. The enemy tulgama<sup>254</sup> for this once was an excellent success, the betrayal of Mongols, the shriveled morale of mixed army had done its part, and Babur suffered the heavy defeat.

With the rest of his detachments he retreated to Samarqand, left Bukhara, but in the capital of Mavarannahr he didn't stay too long - from here he quickly went to Gissar. But there he found himself before sixty-thousandth army of Najmi Soni, who had been sent by shah Ismail as if for help to Babur, but indeed to replace him with more reliable sovereign for Iran. Shah was angry that the army of kizilbashi so soon, in his opinion, left Samarqand. The intelligencers informed to Ismail long ago, that Babur intended to create in Mavarannahr an independent state and his dependence on Shiites he considered temporal.

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<sup>254</sup> the attack into enemy rear

The plan of shah and Najmi Soni to establish the domination of Iran in Mavarannahr, was kept in a deep secret, the alliance with Babur as if remained in force but at first sight of the meeting with Najmi Soni, by his almost unconcealed disregard the sinister schemes of foreigners were felt by Babur.

Two swords of kizilbashi and descendants of Sheybani crossed with each other in Gijduvan. Babur went together with Najmi Soni, but understood that keys to victory Sunni sultans kept in their arms, marched his forth from bloody game and returned to Gissar again.

Najmi Soni was killed in action of Gijduvan himself. Parts of kizilbashi were killed, parts of them were taken prisoners, and parts of them were drowned in Amu Darya under the rout.

The expectation of unknown victory proved to be right! And the fear which put in Khanzoda - begin's heart a year and a half ago, and then disappeared for a time, now revived again in these hard days of defeats.

Babur through Baysun passed to Gissar Karatag and stayed for the night – seven thousand nukers, a family, a train – in a small valley at the bottom of montains. The yurt in which Khanzoda – begin slept with her son and servant was situated near Babur's.

It was past midnight, when Khanzoda – begin suddenly awoke from the clatter of horses' hoofs and noisy bark of dogs. She gave a start of fear, she heard malicious shots from outside:

– “Hit! Hit! Kill cursed Rafidahs!”

The lamp dimly gleamed in the depth of the yurt.

– “It's the enemies have attacked! The enemies!”

Khanzoda – begin<sup>255</sup>, Hurram and the servant got to their feet in a moment.

Begin, already in boots, was fitting into the sleeves of chapan<sup>256</sup> son's hands, when the pointed end of the arrow punched out a thick felt, but its swallow tail stuck in the hole. The mother terror-stricken clasped the son to her breast, and the boy already above mother's shoulder was looking at the pointed end of the arrow with interest which bought him the death.

– “Hey, where are the archers? Khoja Kalonbek! Kasimbek! Takhir! Defend the harem! Protect the children! Shoot! Shoot!”

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<sup>255</sup> my lady

<sup>256</sup> the shavecoat

At Babur's bodyguard were firelocks, - perhaps the most fearful weapon at that time and rare, expensive, - Babur took them at kizilbashi.

Here one of them began to roar not far away, and then several began to fire. Khanzoda-begim so grew bolder that had already almost finished to wear her son, not to forget to hang over chapan a smart dagger.

On the wall of the yurt hung a quiver of "Khurram-shah" with ten arrows. The boy immediately hung it on his shoulder and took to his hand the arrow.

The sounds of battle, of course, frightened the eleven-year-old boy, but with that his fighting excitement awoke. He took in his father's martial spirit from childhood, wanted to grow up quick and showed his courage in action. An attempt to escape into uncle's army was down in his name, when Babur fought in Bukhara. Babur returned him together with a mentor at that time, however praised for partiality to the soldierly affair. The boy adopted mother's passionate love, which she nourished to Babur. From people were devoted body and soul to the Sovereign, who were taught him, Khurram constantly heard about Babur's valor? So it came about that the son of Sheybani - khan day by day was inspired with deep love to the uncle and hate towards his enemies, sheybanids.

He hated them who with the cry now: "Beat, annihilate!" - fell on their stand and wanted to shoot into them all arrows of their "shah" quiver. The boy rushed outside and threw back the curtains of the yurt, however the old nurse-slave with an exclamation: "Oh, my sovereign, where are you going, stop!" - could catch him by his belt, in order to pull back. But she didn't manage to do it: Hurram was a brave boy.

- "Let me go! Hear, let me go! I want to help my uncle, Mirza Babur! Let me go!"

Babur's bodyguard by shots from guns and arrows stopped the enemies, not to allow them to the yurts, in which were women and children. To the yurt of Khanzoda - begim Takhir brought two horses, said firmly:

- "Noble Begim! Young shah! Sit down! Quickly!"

Khanzoda looked at trunks and packs:

- "Must we leave all things?"

– “If we are alive, we will acquire things! Sit down quickly! The sovereign ordered so!”

The full moon shone from the sky. Here by the light of it Mohim – begin with five-year-old Humayun in her arms appeared near the exit of the white yurt. Kasimbek, being on horseback, took the boy and muffled him up by chapan.

Making sure that Khanzoda – begin was in the saddle (Khurram jumped on horse before anyone else), Takhir made sure to seat on horses and his wife with ten-year-old son Safar.

Women and children, protected by the ring of nukers, moved from the camp aside, where a battle wasn't still fought. Through the roar of shots, the clank of blades, the moans of wounded, snorting and neighing of horses the furious shouts were heard:

- “Down with Babur's failures!”
  - “He became Shiite himself and wanted to defile us! Don't come out!”
  - “Down with him! Beat!”
  - “Annihilate them under the feet!”
- Nothing to understand, Khanzoda – begin asked Kasimbek:
- “What do the enemies scream out these rude words?”
  - “The rebels”, - answered the vizier gloomy, – “Again Mongols. Last year in Kunduz they run to us and then back... These as if stayed and now... wanted to catch the sovereign bending, to kill in a dream. Yes, thank Allah, the guards of Takhirkbek sniffed of danger in time.”
  - “Oh, trouble after trouble!”
  - “It's bad that they are twice more then we are. And the attack has prepared beforehand... Hold in the middle, begin! The first row is for the warrior.”

The rebels came close to lock the surroundings. Babur's voice was heard not far away:

– “Ustoz<sup>257</sup> Ali! Lead the shots straight! Straight! Into the breach!”

The bullets easily pierced armors and helmets; it was difficult to stand up the rebels against the shots. Gathered in one fist the most reliable and skillful nukers, Babur would intend to break the defense and run to the fortress of Gissar, where beks – conspirators didn't want let him go. They strove to seize it – the mutiny was raised for the sake of it.

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<sup>257</sup> a teacher, an advisor

The firelocks, barrel of which after three or four shots became very hot, were not fit for the work. Into the breach – in the direction to the east, but not to the south, where children and women were going to move, a thousand nukers rushed at the head of Khoja Kalonbek.

Hand-to-hand fighting on horses is rigorous and fleeting.

Hurram became frightened but he tried to conquer the fear. Oh, how he wanted immediately to hit by the arrow even if one enemy.

The battle had already fallen to fights of particular groups, and one of them reached the nukers who protected children and women. And here Hurram resolutely emboldened the horse, rushed to the first row, quickly drew the bow and one after another shot three arrows.

Khanzoda – begin only for a moment lost sight of him. Seeing that her son was firing a bow, she rushed to him at once. She had already been here when the enemy arrow went into the boy's right side. Khurram uttered a scream, lost hold of the bow and began to slip down from the saddle.

– “My son!” – Mother's exclamation was stronger than the battle's noise.

Hurram had laid out cold, when Takhir raised him to his saddle...

It became dawn. The battle ran out. Babur couldn't fight to the fortress and returned to the valley of Vaxsha. The conspirators, in turn, couldn't pursue him.

Babur's personal doctor treated Hurram for a long time, lying on a clean chekmen<sup>258</sup>, dubbed the wound by the ointments, at least after much effort he stopped the blood. But Khurram didn't recover himself, he only moaned from time to time.

The arrow which went into him passed between lungs and stomach, damaging internals. The doctor wanted the child to drink water with the best pieces of mummy<sup>259</sup>, but it was impossible: the solution was poured by force to go back. Khanzoda – begin rushed to her son with a fear, clasped his insensible body and wailed:

– “Hurramjan! My only son! My Hurram!”

The boy's eyes opened suddenly wide, but the look wasn't bright, the pupils of his eyes rushed about from one side to another and then rolled up. The eyelashes were frozen.

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<sup>258</sup> overclothes a type of the oriental robe made of the baize of camel's hair.

<sup>259</sup> a mineral wax used in medicine

Babur understood that Hurram had died. He clasped his sister with her shoulders and tried to lead her aside. But Khanzoda – begin tore with force, she couldn't lose touch with the body, the dead body of her son by now, she caressed, clasped and raised it, swallowed with tears, called him with a cry:

– “Hurram! Hurramjan, where are you? Where are you, my son? Stand up! Speak! Speak!”

At last Babur – he wept himself – managed to free the boy's body from his mother's arms and lied again on the outspread chekmen. Kasimbek in order to close the child's eyes, carefully stroked with fingers on his elbows, but the child's eyes remained half open. Only now Khanzoda – begin believed in her son's death: In a frenzy she began to beat on her temples, to cry loudly and terribly:

– “My God! It's me who didn't protect you, my son! It would be better of dying me, me! I'll be blessed! What for, what for I have brought you there?”

Babur took brokenly doubled into a fist his sister's hands into his own and with a force turned her face to him.

– “The one who deserved the blessing was me!” – He cried with bitterness. – “It was me who was heaped up trouble for you! It would be better the death took me, I, I was guilty of all. It because of me the guiltless child found himself between the devil and the deep sea! It was me who involved all of us in the bloody battle!”

Kasimbek with sympathy clasped Babur by his shoulders. He blamed himself for that he kept Babur from drastic measures in vain last year, when in Kunduz he knew about the burning plot of beks-Mongols. Today's rebel is the old boil burst out.

– “All of us are guilty, my sovereign”, – said Kasimbek at last. – “The world is that the traitors kill honorable and guiltless people.”

Khanzoda – begin again with a cry rushed to child's body:

– “I was fed to the teeth with this your world! Enough! Bury me with my son together! I will go to another world! Together with Hurram I'll go!”

They put Hurram's body on the stretchers made of the trunks of archa<sup>260</sup>, he was carried all day on shoulders, changing places. And towards evening he was buried in one of the green hills in full view of the range of grand Pamirs Mountains; a white flag quivered on a small grave – as a sign that the innocent soul lied here.

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<sup>260</sup> a treelike juniper

Khanzoda – begin more dead than alive was hardly brought to Kunduz, was treated there, and then was taken to Kabul.

## KABUL OVERWATERED RIVER LOOKS FOR THE NEW CHANNEL

### I

Towards the evening the flock of long-billed ducks flushed from the lake. Mirza Khumayun, waiting for this moment, spent a lot of time sitting in the dense vegetation on the shore. He threw up the bow, released from the bow string an arrow, after it the second at once. From the flushed flock one duck slowed down, began to go down quickly and then helplessly dipping wings, fell into the water near the far bank.

Here the eight-oared canoe of the sovereign was swinging on a light wave, covered with a luxuriant canopy. While Khumayun rounded the lake on a horse together with a tutor and nukers, and reached the shore, shah's close ones sat into the boat, brought the duck from the water and went to the land towards the heir.

Khumayun saw that his father was holding the dead duck and was examining it. The son jumped off the saddle quickly and at a distance, which was required by custom, bent in a bow.

In a sudden movement Babur pulled out the arrow, stuck in the breast of the bird. He looked at the son and asked:

– “Is it your arrow?”

Khumayun noticed that the father was in a state of a slight intoxication again. Babur had drunk a lot recently; here today on a canoe under the canopy he and his table companion-beks drank maynob<sup>261</sup>. Khumayun remembered that the lake and the land around declared the place of shah's repose. He answered blinking guiltily:

– “Excuse me, my sovereign, I shoot here ... straight.”

– “But you have shot to the point.” – Babur smiled. – “Take the bird! Well done!”

Khumayun, having held his left hand to the chest, came to father closer, took the duck with his right hand and passed it immediately to one of the servants.

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<sup>261</sup>a perennial flavored wine like cognac

The swarthy, thin horseman with big eyes from the suite of Babur – his name was Hundubek – showed in a smile the serried rows of white teeth.

– “The heir in a keenness of vision and firmness of the hand takes after his father – Padishah!”

Khoja Kalombek immediately supported him a little indistinctly (maynob had an impact): “According to his words before us the son who was worthy of his famous father.”

Babur looked at Kasimbek with satisfaction, which in usual position of attention and as usual stood aside silently. Kasimbek whom had already been on the wrong side of sixty, refused the position of first vizier and now he was a tutor of Khumayun. “Frankly speaking as formerly of mine... I would have some trouble without this faithful man”, - thought Babur.

– “Respectable atka<sup>262</sup> deserves special praise for teaching Khumayun marksmanship”, – said Babur. – “But the sovereign befits not only to shoot straight. And what kind of expert is my heir in horsemanship?”

Kasimbek encouraged Khumayun with a look and the boy immediately, having twinkled with his eyes, asked permission to answer the question by work.

– “Well, answer!”

Thirteen-year-old Khumayun was almost as tall as his father. In both face and manner he reminded Babur in his youth.

On a signal of Kasimbek, two nukers with two straddled horses stood on one line, at a distance of fifty steps apart. Khumayun mounted his horse with a star easily, moved off back then gave the horse his head on an imaginary straight line; came up on this line first horse, gave a horse the reins imperceptibly quickly, threw out his feet from stirrups, leaned on the strange saddle on the fly and jumped over it at on stroke. Having caught the reins immediately, he cried to the nuker who held the next horse: “Don’t move!”; darted ahead and so easily jumped into another saddle.

The bold slightly drunk beks nearly began to shout all together:

– “Praise! Praise!”

– “Incredibly! Incredibly!”

– “For the entire world as if the father!”

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<sup>262</sup> an advisor

Babur remembered exercises during his dashing boyishness, the same jumping from one saddle to another in the country garden under Andijan, - once he, as he remembered, missed and hurt his leg.

- "May God forbid Khumayun from the evil eye. It seems to me he has excelled me in deftness of horse riding!"

- "Mirza Khumayun follows your example at anything, my sovereign", - Kasimbek told sincerely.

Babur noticed also sincerely:

- "I doubt whether I can be him an example in all!"

Coming Khumayun looked at much paled father's face with surprise:

- "Why, my sovereign! My atka told me about all your battles – both victorious and those in which the destiny didn't give you luck. Probably neither Rustam, nor Suhrab, nor Alpomish struggled so much with enemies like you!"

- "Not battles are important my amirzoda but what they lead to, – said Babur. He meant his defeats and their consequences and the hardest consequence is the final loss of native Mavarannahr."

But something else was more important for Khumayun: his father a lot of time in bloody battles faced death and every time broke off this battle safe and sound, - isn't it the courage, a true heroism? Khumayun had recently heard from Kasimbek the story about how in winter in severe frost and dangerous snow storm, when nobody dared to mount the high pass between Herat and Kabul, the pass on which a deep snow lied even in summer, – Babur passed it with his nukers, he had overcome everything that was impossible to get over a person, if he didn't set the difficult goals to lie under snow-slips. "We went in the snow breast-deep", - told the tutor. – "The horses didn't go, fell down on the snow. But people got out by turn, threw about the snow, made a path. But when and nukers didn't go from weariness and altitude disease, which provoked for lack of the air, then our sovereign stepped up. But frosts grew furious, and he didn't notice how he had injured his face and ears by frostbite. But nevertheless we passed; he led all of us through this awful snow pass."

Telling about endless dangers, having flied over Babur's head, Kasimbek assured Khumayun, that his father cast a spell against death by fate. Khumayun was growing up under the influence of this naive persuasion. And now he asked his father with trustful nursery simplicity:

– “My sovereign, is it true that here, in Kabul, when was the battle with conspirators, the strong nuker by the name Dost didn’t recognize you and hit you with a sabre?”

Babur smiled:

– “Forget all the past... I came to Kabul after winter crossing with a frostbite face; apparently, I was not myself at all! But betrayers met us with sabres in Kabul. They deceived nukers, among them and Dost... Dost knew me enough well. I could cry to him:

“Dost, come to your senses!” But when the sabre was raised, it was difficult to keep from, not to hit – the sabre fell on my helmet. I think Dost recognized me by my voice and his hand hesitated, and that’s why his blow wasn’t so strong. Nobody remained alive from his blow. He injured my head that time.”

– “And what about himself?”

– “And he apparently frightened, threw his sabre, escaped and hid... I didn’t pursue him.”

Both Khumayun and beks were delighted with hearing. Modesty is the best policy, but... the first present Babur’s forty-year-old vizier, fine handsome man bek Muhammad Dulday, reeling a little, decided to arrive at the truth:

– “All depends on God, and happens from heaven! God made so that our dear sovereign wouldn’t harm him, neither sabre, nor frost, nor arrow!”

Khumayun moved away from the hostility of the servile vizier with the red-drunk face in an unfriendly manner. He only wanted to speak with his father. In general the boy more than ever has reached out for his father lately. But Babur constantly was busy with his state affairs, decrees and orders, in seclusion with books and copy-books, in free time with feasts together with authorized beks. He looked at Khumayun as a boy, who wasn’t suited to being a companion. He, on the contrary, was dying to talk to his father. The circle of friends on childish antics and boring teachers even including Kasimbek, suited him less and less.

– “Last year on the bank of a river Sind, you, my father, they say, fought with a tiger...”

– “Where did you hear from?”

– “I saw the fell of the tiger in your own room.”

Babur nodded to beks behind him:

– “We overcame the tiger all together.”

Hindubek objected with a smile – the white teeth flashed:

– “If there wasn’t our sovereign among us, we wouldn’t dare approach the tiger.”

Khumayun cast a glance at his father, full of admiring...

But Babur, talking to his son, was in Mavarannahr mentally: he didn’t forget the defeat in the struggle with Sheybani and sheybanids, it didn’t leave his mind, burnt his heart. “And it had to leave Gissar! What is the power? If it isn’t it, it will not and the luck... The fate turns its back on me again and again, Humo flows from my shoulder – bird of happiness” In order to lose contact with reality, to consign to oblivion a grief and sorrows, which multiplied in his fate, he drank wine more and more often, he became drunk but the hurt didn’t leave him. And his look - a person, who went into a tailspin, - applied to his son, his Khumayun: it turned out that he began to be filled with a heedful interest to his father’s life.

For a moment he saw himself in the eyes of a son-teenager. Indeed, what the son is proud of, it was, it happened and registered into his real being. Beks explained his courage because of flattery as something supernatural, a sign of the special position of Allah. But Allah punished him... especially everything: both good and bad, both victories and defeats depended on people – earthly and common, and he is an earthly, although he isn’t common in everything, that Khumayun felt his innocent childish soul.

Perhaps, Babur realized for the first time that not only he, the father was a support to his son, but vice versa: the son, his thirteen-year-old Khumayun, was his support and encouragement. The life seemed to Babur a hell on earth, and now as if having seen this night with son’s eyes, he began to make out in it light points, similar to stars.

Khumayun as if staying with his father face to face dropped his voice and said nearly in whisper:

– “All poems from the collection that were presented me, I learnt by heart. If you wish to check up, ask me...”

Beks stood behind Babur’s back – his close ones, his people. What did they want most of all? They wanted to come back to their canoe quickly, to go on with their feast.

Babur turned to beks, he said suddenly strictly:

– “Dear beks, today, I support we both have swum and...have enjoyed enough. Now I intend to study with Mirza Khumayun! The horse!”

And Babur sat onto the saddle, and Khumayun jumped on his horse joyfully. Father and son rode side by side, going to the city. Kasimbek and his suite were behind them in some distance.

Babur's eyes shone more than usual. Or suddenly he nearly shut his eyes. Oh, maynob – the insidious wine!

Overcoming its influence, smiling tipsily, Babur applied to his son:

– “So ... well, amirzoda<sup>263</sup>, listen... listen...”

Khumayun, shining from realization that he was riding stirrup in stirrup with his father, read rubai<sup>264</sup> in a hurry:

*We sin with abuse, return each other evil for good.  
We make a trouble to ourselves and our neighbors.  
How many hurts and offences we cherish in our hearts  
And we wash off them later on with tears and wine.*

No, Khumayun isn't so simple! What a rubai he has chosen! He wants to say that he understands why his father was carried away by the wine, and that he forgives him today's intoxication.

Babur laughing confusedly, said:

– “It's true, only in the first bekt<sup>265</sup> you broke the metre, you lost one syllable... you lost all meaning and joke in this rubai.”

– “How... Did I lose? Whom the joke over?” – surprised Khumayun.

– “Over that... over them who... but sometimes people say to each other many offensive words, seek a word in order to offend their close ones more. And then... it's necessary to get rid of conscience-stricken... they seek an oblivion in the wine. And again, it means, they offend others, closes... Sometimes it is useful to jeer at oneself.”

Khumayun was surprised again.

– “Is it useful? Why?”

– “It is difficult to understand at your age... Do you know, I didn't quite have a longing for a wine till thirty... What about you? Don't you long?”

Khumayun was quite confused. Then he looked at the swelling up of his father's eyelids a little severely and sadly:

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<sup>263</sup> a heir of the ruler

<sup>264</sup> an eastern form of versification

<sup>265</sup> an eastern form written in verse; the distich which contains complete thought

- "I don't like wine."

He, Babur, felt the disgust to the wine at thirty too. He nodded his head approvingly and said:

- "Well, what do you like?"

- "What do I like?" - Khumayun thought for as little; - "I like riding, seeing and learning. Most of all I like good books which are about heroes, I'm ready to read from morning to night..."

- "He looks like me", - thought Babur. Examined him, let his eyes linger on his son's hand holding the handle of the lash. - Swarthy boy... Perhaps because he was born and grew up in the south". But the hand was very familiar with his own hand. Babur spanned his son's hand wrist:

- "Hey, open your palm!"

Khumayun pushed his lash into the belt and open his palm. Babur brought his open palm closer to his son's palm and compared... All short and long lines repeated on both palms. Khumayun began to laugh happily, but Babur gave a deep sigh:

- "Pray God that you won't have such troubles and misfortunes felt by me!"

- "I want to adopt all that you have felt: I'm the heir!"

Babur looked at his son anxiously:

- "Be more choosy for all this. Such affairs are down in my name that are worth neither adopted nor inherited."

- "But what kind of, my sovereign?"

- "Bitter... cruel...iniquitous... What of them!"

Khumayun became thoughtful. Is any confirmation to these father's words in his poems? It seems they are, I have found it."

*Wherever I go - the sorrow walks near along the road  
Turn to the right, to the left – the suffering comes to meet again  
Who saw so little rest, so much alarm?  
Who could so many troubles suffer, so much torment adopt?*

Babur's heart stirred from scalding truth of these lines.

- "How well you read, my Khumayun", - he praised his son. "You understand that I have said to you before... I don't want, I don't want that all those misfortunes which fell on my head, will fall on you."

- "I understand, my father... Now I will tell only about pleasant times in your life, which attracts me, well?"

And in the citadel the father and the son continued their conversation. They sat a lot of time in the spacious and bright room, with windows overlooking the mountains Shahi Kabul. Khumayun took a pen and suddenly with letters Hatti Baburi wrote such father's bekt:

*Turkic people were never fated to have their own alphabet, oh Babur. – What to do!*

*And Hatti Baburi is a signakiy gift, but not yours. – What is to be done?*

Babur remembered Samarcand ignoramuses, fanatics who had stoned the teacher who tried to teach children by Babur's alphabet... Dark and cruel forces, ruined Ulugbek once, hissing snakes, they started up their poison stings, when he, Babur, got at reconstructing the great scholar's observatory. Babur was accused at treason to Islam, they persuaded in it even a considerable part of the army, that promoted his defeat in Kizil Kum.

They forced, forced to refuse spreading the useful alphabet invented by him...

– “Who of the teachers taught you this?” – Babur examined the writing of his son with admiring.

– “I have learnt from calligrapher Mirbadal.”

Khumayun wrote bekt without mistakes, but, of course, he isn't used to this alphabet yet, that's why the letters turned out uneven, unequal by size.

– “Do you like it, my son?”

– “Very! There are few diacritical and interior marks: it's easy to read and write.”

– “Well, train more, harder, my son. When you write me, write with these letters, all right? And I will answer you using them too. It will be easier to us to keep a secret.”

Khumayun immediately imagined how he would begin to correspond with his father secretly and the son's heart pierced the proud feeling of own importance for such a person, hero and powerful man, like his father. And with it this feeling was tender, childishly touching and naive – Khumayun wanted to do his father something more pleasant...

"My sovereign, would you like, if I play something on the rubab?"

- "Oh, I will listen with pleasure."

They brought afghan rubab<sup>266</sup>, agglutinate by the mother-of-pearl. Khumayun tuned it, touched the strings. The belly of rubab made majestic sounds, like a rolling echo in the mountains.

Khumayun played melodies in a style "navo" – then "savt".

Last of the melodies, played by his son, was painfully familiar to Babur: of course he composed it himself last year, named "Chorgoh savti". Musicians played this savt rarely: there was just something about it, that didn't allow playing it at feasts. How Khumayun could memorize "Chorgoh savti"? Did the teachers give a hit, how the father could please?

Is this the way which desire to be honored with the praise of shah and of course rewards?

Well, if it is so? It's important that Khumayun plays with real emotion! I doubt whether understanding a deep suffering truth of the melody in order to prove sincerity of his words, that he would follow the lead of his father in all good – both warrior and painter... Is this a bad desire for a boy?

Babur listened attentively to the music and thought about his son with a warm delight and at the same time how he became to corrupt himself willing to see all as black as heads, everybody suspecting in some profit. But what kind of profit has Khumayun? No! And his own life seemed to him now, like Khumayun felt once the impulses of blessed and noble desires and his life ran at that time like a transparent spring. Then the waters of spring were muddled by slips. But this spring is alive to this day, it struggles with poems and music – Let it streams nourish Khumayun's heart!

Babur so clearly felt for the first time today an amazing connection between his own life and son's life. Of course, the son can never follow the lead of his father in all, but in all – it isn't necessary. If the son is strongly attached to his father, if he, as people say, takes after his father, then their lives join in the flight of time, the lives of father and his son, if the father doesn't do, it will do his son – here is what Babur wanted to believe in now.

Therefore it is good, if the tutor – atka, the mother and Khumayun's teachers longing to cultivate love in the son and devotion

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<sup>266</sup> stringed musical instrument played by plucking

to the father, image him Babur only to good advantage. It isn't a flattering servility they bring up in him but...they warn against bad. Doesn't he, Babur, wish to give his son only deserved, hoping that his son won't repeat his faults and won't suffer his torments.

At the same evening Babur called Kasimbek and gave him truly a gift of the shah – an expensive fur coat with gilded buttons and a beautiful horse with all harness. Both others teachers and tutors of the heir were presented with gold and silver...

– “Well, what will you present my son, tell himself?” – asked once Babur, coming to Khumayun's room, and left with him again alone.

Khumayun, a passionate book lover, took care of his own library very much: it occupied the whole special room, and besides in the boy's bedroom there was a bookcase made of polished walnut. Khumayun opened his bookcase and showed his father a pull-out shelf, richly decorated with carving, on which stood alone Babur's collection of poems.

– “This shelf I have assigned for your works, my father”, – said Khumayun. – “And I pray God that he will give you a chance to write more books. I dream that this entire shelf will be filled by them.”

Babur cheered up.

– “It's clever! But ... in order to carry out your wish, I must write and write all my life!”

He saw how Khumayun was confused and added good-naturedly:

– “But let it happen! They say a good dream is half the battle! From this day forward I begin to write a new book for you! Well, give me your copy-book.”

Khumayun quickly took from the shelf a new copy-book in the gilded hardback, which hadn't been started yet and offered it to his father with two-hands.

Having taken the copy-book, Babur came to the table with eight legs. There was a pointed pen on it. Babur wrote the first entry with special tender emotion.

*You are my heart's sprout, oh son...*

Babur imagined a big tree which threw a draw. Or maybe differently? Two trees – big and very young and thin which are engrafted to each other – became as a whole and their joint fruit

absorbed the best qualities of both. How seldom it happens with people! The hostility between sovereign fathers and son-heirs is nearly constant in this world. Such hostility took both the great Ulugbek's life, and then Abdul Latif's life, his son-killer. The reward of the fate when a son sincerely loves his father all his life, he is committed to him, continues his work. But when does it happen? When a father loves his son so.

Babur wrote firmly in Khumayun's copy-book the first bekt:

*The cutting is engrafted in my heart, and I can't live without it...  
Justify your name, my son: hold your happiness.*

Babur wrote distich-masnawi<sup>267</sup> – epic, sermons and even scientific compositions are written so. The poems flew freely and easily.

Everything, that you intended, manage to make. Reach your goals!

Let thousands of people love you: give them back love in reply.

“But why not write the whole book of masnawi? Write and devote it to my son!” – thought Babur joyfully-enlightened.

– “I will write the continuation later.” – He got up from the table quickly. – “You will get a book as a present from me, the title of which will be in the tune with your name!”

The book “Mubayun” really was written by Babur in that year. He included in it those several lines of the ardent wishes to the son that appeared for the first time on the pages of his son's copy-book. And the book “Mubayun” was rewritten the best calligrapher of Kabul; it was bound properly by a bookbinder-master.

“Mubayun” in the sonorous poetry that stated the point of Muslim law. The lessons of fiqh tormented Khumayun, as some time and young Babur, with its boring confusion and as if deliberately more sophisticated Arabic language. It is clear that Khumayun read his father's book now, written with poetical magnificence and sonorous lines in native Turkic language as if by itself without any forces imprinted in his memory. It is clear that with “Mubayun” grew in Khumayun the love to his father, the admiration for his talent, the faith to his amazing force and in his faithfulness to the word! Khumayun knew how many difficult things had his father and how he

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<sup>267</sup> an eastern form written in verse with a pair rhyme of hemistich

was busy from morning till night. Though he kept his promise and found time in order to write the whole book for the son. And what kind of poems! Khumayun constantly admired by them, put given book to his eyes, kissed it as a sacred thing.

When Khumayun was fifteen, on the middle shelf of his bookcase there appeared one more book of Babur – “Muxtasar” Khumayun studied the laws of aruz<sup>268</sup> on it. In fact, the thirst to write poems was passed on from father to son. However father’s poetry so eclipsed the poetical experiences of Khumayun, that the son hid them, ashamed to show them to his father and was sure that he would not be a great poet. “But for what to be a flash in the pan? It would be better to be its disinterested expert and connoisseur!” – So once told him his father, and this thought firmly imprinted in Khumayun’s consciousness.

Now only one unsatisfied desire was left at Khumayun to read “My Past”, a book about his father’s life, which, as Khumayun heard, the father had been writing from his youth. Some of its parts, concerning his pasting spaces of time – “Fergana”, “Andijan”, “Samarqand”, - the father read to his wife, Mohim – begin. In his family this book had been already named “Baburname”. Khumayun had waited for the opportunity for a long time in order to ask it for his father.

When Khumayun was sixteen, Babur appointed him his deputy in Badahshan, the mountain land, back from Kabul. Babur sent there his son together with Kasimbek and others, more reliable people, given them only two thousands of the best nukers. Of course, he was anxious for his son. He went to see him off as far as the pass, all the time on his way he spent on admonitions.

Khumayun considered this joint journey suitable for conversation about the cherished book.

– “My Sovereign, it will be very difficult for me without you in Badahshan. A help, which you promised me generously, is my support. But without you I will have a constant promise with you: I will carry your books along. Alas, there isn’t “My Past” among them. I ask you, my Sovereign, if you deign, let calligraphers rewrite it for me.”

Babur, willingly complying with son’s requests, shook his head for this once and even frowned:

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<sup>268</sup> a metric system of versification, based on a certain interchange of long and short syllables widely used in eastern classical poetry

– “That book isn’t finished yet. It is in passages, and I can’t give it back to calligraphers.”

– “When will you finish, my father? I will be looking forward!”

Babur looked at his son with meaning:

– “You’d rather not hurry amirzoda. Know, the end of that book is the end of my life.”

Khumayun started:

– “Why do you say so, my father?!”

“Baburname” seemed really stalled. The union with kizilbashi and cruel defeat, which he sustained, Babur, since he had brought to his motherland the army of kizilbashi, - about all of it not to write but even to remember was difficult. But shouldn’t it become the final chapter of the book? But to sit here, in Kabul, to fight or to put up with numerous tribes of its appanage, to describe its places of interest (he made it, made, he described both mountains, and rivers, and plants, and animals) – isn’t it quite enough for him, Babur? Does the life end up here and dies away in small problems little by little? Babur felt: in order to continue and finish the book suitably, it was necessary to win more great victories, such ones that they would wipe off the stains of heavy defeats from Sheybani and his offspring. Here now the son Khumayun grows up and becomes a kind assistant. Perhaps a cherished goal – creation of the big, well-knit in its part state which Babur didn’t carry out together with different relatives and beks, - will he carry out together with his son?

These thoughts spread in his head like a wind. Babur only said aloud, unwilling to upset his son:

– “Let my words about the end of my life not to trouble you. I have said so because I intend to write “My Past” till my dying day. I cherish a hope to insert into its future chapters and your good things.”

– “Oh, the Sovereign, if it is so, write “Baburname” still fifty or even hundred.”

– “Will you have so much patience to wait so long?” – smiled Babur.

Khumayun answered seriously:

- “Swear before God, I will bear as long as I am spared.”

## II

A blue marble palace was named Bogi Dilkusho – “the garden, where sorrow dispelled”. Babur built it for Khanzoda - begim on the very bank of the river Kabul.

Mavlyana Fazliddin was sitting in one of the halls on his heels as if he was ready to make low bows and next to him putting his hands on his knees and dropping his eyes, became rooted to the carpet his offspring. The son is young, but you can see the hair on his cheeks and chin.

On the opposite side in a long dark-blue dress with a white silk shawl on her head covering the face stood motionless Khanzoda-begim.

A silence was oppressively to all. At last Khanzoda-begim broke it with anguished voice breaking with emotion – answering her own ideas and as if continuing broken conversation:

– “The worst of all was eventually that person who departed this life, mavlyana, - because the dead person can't return... The living person moans and cries, suffers and grieves, but nevertheless... nevertheless consoles themselves, is reconciled with it. Look at me. I am still alive.”

– “Begin these days it is difficult for a living person as well. Twenty three years had passed since I left Andijan. How many troubles fell on my head since that time! How many misfortunes we all have endured!”

Having become oblivious for a moment, Khanzoda-begim went to the youth in her imagination, spending in Andijan, so much closer to her soul and distant from now. It's difficult to believe now that Fazliddin was strong, charming and young at that time... Mullah Fazliddin, architect Fazliddin, Fazliddin... horseman. How many torments the flitting decades brought him! The thousands of wrinkles covered not only his face for this time, but his neck, the hands became dry and sinewy, and the waist was stooping, - he looked like over more than sixty, but meanwhile Khanzoda-begim knew enough well that Fazliddin was fifty three. “But am I?” – begin thought, imagined her reflection in the mirror in which she looked at many times a day: both in front teeth came out and lips quite paled and the hair was depleted, covered ash in a thin coat.

The best years – the youth and women's flourishing – passed in the unceasing withering; a flower perishes with no time to open fully,

- this thought drew tears again on the eyes of Khanzoda-begim. Having wiped them quickly, she asked:

- "Mavlyana, how old is your son?"
- "Twenty one, begim."

By this time Khanzoda thought that her dead son Khurram would be twenty two. And tears poured again from the unbearable pain in her heart, never leaving her. Crying she spoke again:

- "Let the life of your son be long! Pray God you not to feel the most terrible grief whatever grief, - the death of children... How I wished to go after my only child but they didn't allow me to die...."

Fazliddin knew that one couldn't stop the tears of begim. He shot an inquiring glance at his son. He dropped his eyes. In order to distract somehow the woman from her mournful memories he began to tell about his sufferings that he had to endure:

- "Do you know, begim, how it was uneasy in Herat. At first Shah Ismail, having seized the town, came to harassed Sunnites sore. It had passed a little bit of time and the authority changed. The predecessors and commanders of Sheybani-khan began to revenge Shiites mercilessly. The graves of Shiites were dug up in Merv and with the bones of kizilbashi's confessors – those, who killed Sheybani-khan in Merv, - his supporters loaded the guns. But kizilbashi occupied Herat again. And again the revenge – it is the revenge to the supporters of Sheybani now... Everywhere is blood, everywhere is inhumanity... Kamoliddin Bekhzod was kidnapped from Herat to Tebriz, to the shah for the service in his palace. Mavlyana Khondamir, escaping from perpetual discords, disappeared from the town, hid in some distant kishlak<sup>269</sup>, they say on father's homeland. But we from Samarqand as if returned again to Herat, yes... to regret, it had to regret bitterly. The hands pined for work. Both mine and the son... The son Alaviddin is a good master of anaglyphy. But who needs the art in Herat now? And I consulted with a poet Muhammad Sultan and went to Kabul, seeking the refuge at Mirza Babur.

This joyless story of Fazliddin flew evenly, and Khanzoda – begim managed with her tears, calmed a little.

- "And you had better come here, mavlyana", - uttered she, having breathed loudly. - "I need to return you that, as you remember, trust me. I don't know what to do with your values."

Fazliddin began to blink with his eyes:

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<sup>269</sup> a village in Central Asia

– “What kind noble begin?”

Khanzoda smiled sadly: you have forgotten, have forgotten everything... haven't you forgotten everything?

– “In a moment, you will see in a moment, what kind.” – She stood from the carpet, went out of the hall, having opened a small carved door in the depth of it, and soon returned with her servant, who carried something wrapped up in a white silk. At a signal of begin the servant presented to mavlyana with two hands what was brought, and moving backwards in a low bow, went away. The silent Alaviddin at father's signal went away too, leaving Fazliddin and Khanzoda in private.

Fazliddin unfolded the papers carefully, the papers with its old, turning yellow edges! Oh Allah! His calculations, his pictures of magnificent buildings, which he, but not, which they intended to build once in Andijan together with Khanzoda – begin. His soul threw some sort of hot wave; Fazliddin's eyes broke out with ardor. And Khanzoda – begin, - oh Allah, how long she kept his papers, in spite of all trials, which fell to her lot! – seemed to him just pretty and charming as thenadays, when he was fondly in love with her. As if the charming of distant-distant hour came back, there, on the mountain near Osh, where he put up for Babur his first hujra<sup>270</sup> – pavilion, - they walked down together with Khanzoda – begin along the rocky path, she slipped and he, protected the girl from the fall, clasped her figure.

Enlightened, mavlyana addressed to Khanzoda – begin:

– “Oh, you have returned me the soul of that time! You have worked a miracle! How much time have passed, how many ways have been gone through – and they are again here... my... our dreams!”

And Khanzoda – begin fell into tender and grievous joy at touching the time of her youth and she began uttering:

– “Right, right, mavlyana, and this package went through a lot of troubles – together with me, with all jewels, I have not so many of them, but they are dear. Only when we went from Kunduz to Samarcand last time... it was difficult to pass through mountains and rivers there... I left some of my trunks in Kunduz. In one of those trunks your papers had been kept. In Samarcand I worried about them all the time, I intended to send for them an authorized person in summer... then... the trouble came... And it turns out better that I left

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<sup>270</sup> the beginning of Muslim era, 16<sup>th</sup> of July 622 the prophet Muhammed, escaping from a pursuit of enemies, run from Mecca to Medina

them in Kunduz: all my other trunks fell into Mongol – conspirators hands... Look, are all the pictures in their places?"

Khanzoda – begin threw away from her face the silk shawl and reached out for the papers herself.

– "Yes, everything! All of them are here." – Fazliddin looked at her face eagerly and thankfully. Then he added: – "In Samarqand I was eager to see you, begin, but didn't dare to come."

– "I wanted to invite you myself...But... the papers were left in Kunduz...I didn't dare..."

Fazliddin wanted to remind Khanzoda – begin about her picture in Andijan (oh Allah, how much he, the creator of the picture, endure because of it!) The picture of begin wasn't among the papers.

He looked through the papers one by one once more.

Khanzoda – begin understood what the painter was looking for, she blushed a little and asked:

– "Do you still go in for painting, mavlyana?"

– "Noble begin, when you don't paint a lot, the hands lose their skill... Now I go in for architecture, I draw buildings."

– "That which you painted in Andijan... not buildings... I keep separately", – said Khanzoda–begin and looked away in embarrassment.

Fazliddin understood that Khanzoda–begin didn't want to carry her picture: mavlyana came with his adult son. And then – what is the use reminding of their old flame again? It will give both only unnecessary pains.

– "You are right; begin...Let that picture be always with you." – And putting his hands to his breast, Mavlyana Fazliddin made a low bow civilly.

It would be better to speak about architectural projects, pictures and calculations of buildings.

– "I can work on them now;" – Fazliddin touched the papers easily, - "on account of what I have learnt in Herat. And after that it would be possible to implement them freely. But tell, noble, where can these madrasah and these palaces be built? Andijan is far away. Maybe in Kabul?"

Khanzoda – begin did not reply for a minute, nodded her head:

– "No, we can't manage to build them in Herat too."

– “But I dreamt...under this project...to build madrasah which could compete with madrasah Bibi-khanum in Samarqand. And I dreamt to call it your name – madrasah of Khanzoda – begin!”

– “I will be thankful to you for such a plan to my dying day, mavlyana. But alas those beks were right, who said that it was necessary a great state for construction of great buildings, do you remember? Mirza Babur went towards this aim so many times... But Kabul is not so strong; there isn’t any strength and resources for a great building in Kabul appanage.”

– “It seems that we are fated never to achieve our dreams.”

Khanzoda-begin knew something about that Babur had had a secret plan to establish the united large state in recent years within Afghanistan, Badahshan and above all North India. The Delhian sultanate was divided; the local princes quarreled with each other; the followers of Hinduism didn’t adopt the Muslim ruling top, but those didn’t admit Hinduism, and antagonized the followers of Hinduism. Babur went to the campaign – reconnaissance to the bank of Sind, but there was nothing to say about the spies, getting him a line on the state of Lodi.

– “Mavlyana, I’m afraid to dream”, - confessed Khanzoda – begin. – “I know what a dear has to pay for that, who strives for a big state, and therefore for great architecture. Now I can easily renounce my old dream; I don’t want to threaten again the future of my dear brother, our sovereign.”

Having breathed sorrowfully, Mavlyana Fazliddin nodded knowingly:

– “Truly, truly...The fate is against our dream, begin, the fate itself. I have already grown old”, - and his voice really began to rattle as if he was an old man, – “I have no luck all my life. Wars, revolutions, raids, destructions...Won’t it go on like this forever?! You know I’m not alone, but tens of scientists, poets, architects more educated than me, more talented than me, have been exiled from Mavarannahr and Khorasan. Where does the storm of nomads, intestine strives, discords because of the faith turn them out? Formerly the black wind used to turn you out from Andijan – you found asylum in Samarqand. Force to leave Samarqand – you were rescued in Herat. But this black storm rages everywhere now! There is no rescue either in Samarqand, or in Herat! We are all exiled as if the river which lost its channel... How many talents, oh Allah, how many reviving waves disappear, vanish in

deserts of present life! They say some time Jeyhun rushed about like this, disappeared – until he made his own new way to the new sea. And we, will we find it? Let the cruel dome of the sky take pity on our sons! At least let future generations find their new way, reach their sea!"

Khanzoda-begim sympathized with the architect in her whole heart. It was a cry from her heart – the person whose creative genius could not find a use all his life.

– "Mavlyana, not only you, but Mirza Ulugbek wants a new sea in order that all kinds of talents gathered to this new sea of art and science."

– "Oh, begim, I know that the fate has no bowels; I know that he is my last hope... That's why I have come here, to Kabul."

– "Where have you settled, mavlyana?"

– "We haven't settled yet, we have stayed temporary with my nephew Takhirbek. It appears he has left for the campaign together with Mirza Babur."

Khanzoda-begim understood that there was nobody to look after the architect and his family. That's why he was dressed poorly, looked like pale and thin as if he starved... Perhaps, God forbid, is it so?

Khanzoda-begim stood quickly, was sorry that she left the architect for a moment alone, and went to the thalamus. There she got the key and opened the hidden cupboard which stood in the niche behind a silk curtain.

The shah's sister along with the highest courts at behest of Babur is due to her the amount of money. Monthly the palace treasurer brought in a leather purse of thousand of dirhams<sup>271</sup>. Begim was an owner of a big allotment. But whom does Khanzoda spend all these money on? That's why the purses with gold dirhams lied in the secret cupboard, most of them weren't opened.

Khanzoda – begim weighed how much Mavlyana Fazliddin would provide for his family during three or four months till he, as she thought, had to live without constant payment. She took two leather purses and called her servant. He put the purses on a silver tray and carried it to the guest...

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<sup>271</sup> a monetary unit of many Eastern countries

It was difficult for Mavlyana Fazliddin to take money from Khanzoda – begin. But where is the other way? There isn't it at all! Therewith begin rushed to help him.

– “Mavlyana, this money, two thousand dirhams, is from Mirza Babur's treasure. He is out, and I paid you on his behalf the required payment. One purse is for you, another for your son. Please, take it...”

### III

... The cranes fly high up in the autumn sky above Kabul ...

Babur and Mohim – begin listen to their guttural scream on the ayvan<sup>272</sup> in the country estate, peered into the sky: the easy-winged flock hurried and rushed from north to south – a living thread of the black pearl on the sky of blue.

The fatigue seems to Babur in a fine and pure cry “chirrup”, “chirrup!”: the cranes are flying from distant lands. They have flown above Mavarannahr, perhaps right above Andijan? Perhaps, they have gone down to have a rest on the banks of the chill waters in the neighborhood of Mavarannahr?

He, Babur, won't see more native places of those which have seen flying cranes. His heart directs him so.

The screaming of cranes, calming down little by little, has died away at last... The silent moan of home-sickness... There is nothing more expressive and powerful than such a moan.

Babur became gloomy. He clapped his hands, called the servant, ordered to bring wine.

Mohim – begin came nearer to his husband, pronounced with a soft reproach:

– “My sovereign, the wine in the morning? What for? Children will come for a morning greeting now... Here our Mirza Khindol<sup>273</sup> is coming together with atka.”

Eight-year-old Khindol with a small silk turban on his head, a small sword is hanging on his belt on a beautiful small strap – went up the stairs to the high ayvan and in the doors like an adult folded his arms on his chest respectfully and bowed low to his parents. The father smiled sadly. He came to his son; having hugged him for his

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<sup>272</sup> a terrace, a veranda, a shed

<sup>273</sup> merry, triumphant, joyful

shoulders, he led him to his place and sat down by his side on a brocade kurpacha.<sup>274</sup>

– “There is a sword on your belt, it means, the campaign will be expected, won’t it?”

A boy with big eyes looked at his mother inquiringly. Mohim – begin nodded, allowing him to join the conversation. Khindol said distinctly:

– “My Sovereign, I ask you to take me to the campaign with you.”

– “Where?”

– “To India”, - the boy’s eyes lit up

– “What will we do in India?”

– “I want to see tigers.”

– “Do tell!” – Babur began to laugh, – “Will see? Only will see?”

The boy turned red and clenched his fist on the hilt of his “real” sword.

– “No! The tiger will want to eat me but I will kill him with this sword!”

Babur patted his son’s shoulder tenderly:

– “Oh, well done! In this case, of course, we will need to go on a campaign to India...”

The servant – royal carver appeared at the doors with a jug of wine; Mohim waved him her palm secretly: come back, the sovereign is busy with his conversation, he has forgotten about the wine; the servant turned back silently.

But Babur asked Khindol, did he learn the alphabet, did he know by heart some poems.

– “I know suras from Koran”, - answered the boy proudly.

– “Khindol has other passions than Khumayun had”, - explained Mohim. – “Though he also likes to play war, to fire a bow but books attract him still a little.”

– “But he is still small, isn’t he?”

– “I don’t know, Gulbadan is younger than Khindol... But... you will see today... she likes reading more than Khumayun.”

– “Doesn’t Khumayun take after his uncles?” – Babur became thoughtful.

Mohim–begin understood what a sense was in these words. Mohim – begin wasn’t Khindol’s mother, but Dildor – ogacha<sup>275</sup> was, a

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<sup>274</sup> a narrow quilt

<sup>275</sup> a concubine

daughter of Sultan Makhmud, Babur's uncle on the paternal side. According to custom Babur had three wives, who were living in three various places in Kabul. Mohim-begim resigned to the custom silently, but she wasn't accustomed to it with her heart. She felt the second marriage of her husband to the beautiful woman of Kabul Gulruh - begim especially keenly, who gave birth to two sons, - Mirza Kamron is sixteen now, but Mirza Askar is fourteen. "We themselves strengthen the future hostility between sons!" – thought the mother of Khumayun. However she kept silent: she had no luck, two of her daughters and her second son died at a very young age. But then she became infertile at all. The malicious jokes of Gulruh – begim reached the ears of Mohim – begim.

Babur felt sufferings of his first, the most loving wife Mohim-begim. Custom is custom, but though guiltless he was guilty towards her.

One day he slept at Mohim-begim at that place, at that mansion. Suddenly Mohim of her own accord suggested: "I ate her heart out with futility! I'm ready to nurse your child now even if he has been born to another wife! I knew that Dildor – ogacha is weak again. If she delivered safely, the son or daughter, - give the child to me for care!" Babur swore at that time at any price to do just as Mohim had asked. And when Dildor – ogacha gave birth to son Khindol, Babur ordered that three-day old child be taken from the mother and gave to Mohim – begim. Dildor, having borne this child nine months, of course, cried bitterly, complained that she lost her only little son. "Custom is custom", - Babur persuaded her. – Since olden times in the families the sovereign – sons were given to care to the elder wife. Mohim-begim brought up Mirza Khumayun, the heir of the throne, - how well he manages with duties of my deputy in Badahshan. Let God and Khindol will be such a person."

However Babur noticed that Khindol had had other inclinations. One thought of Dildor's father and brothers – noble people, but rather rude, had little to do with science and art.

Mohim – begim caught her husband's fear, decided to object:

– "Khindol is your own flesh and blood. He has both Khumayun's amorousness and his dreaminess. You also at the age of Khindol were fond of playing war – Khanzoda – begim told me about it.

Babur began laughing and addressed to the boy again:

– "If I give you books, will you read them then?"

Khindol answered not so confidently:

– “I will.”

Babur sent for munshi and ordered to inform the keeper of the library in Kabul a list of books (Mohim – begin will make it): let them rewrite for Khindol little by little. Then at his signal the servant took out from the room a beautifully decorated child’s bow with tens of gilded arrows (that was a work of the famous Tashkent masters). How glad the child was!

– “Here take and fire, but don’t forget about books!” – Babur asked him parting.

After Khindol, a pretty middle-aged woman rose to ayvan, having led by the hand a five-year-old girl. Babur answered to the bow of Robiya. After the death of Babur’s mother Kutlug Nigor – khanum Robiya was transferred to the service of Mohim – begin, she nursed Gulbadan that the elder wife had taken too. The only son of Takhir and Robiya Safar has already become a big boy, he is studying in madrasah now, but Takhir is going on to be the head of Babur’s bodyguard.

The dressed up pretty girl bore a strong resemblance of Dildor - ogacha with her face, her own mother. Dildor not only resisted for this once but rejoiced: she was convinced how Mohim-begin was wise and attentive to her Khindol, how noble and selfless her soul was.

There was no comparing her with wicked and willful Gulruh-begin. Babur’s second wife took a dislike not only to Mohim-begin, but Dildor-ogacha too. But they also, to their turn, united against Gulruh, and they rallied “joint children” now. And moreover Babur’s coolness to Gulruh – begin...

Of course, a good many of difficult everyday relations were behind sweet Gulbadan that had bowed to her father in a funny and awkward manner. Babur took the girl in his arms tenderly and then put her onto his knees. A tablecloth – dastarhan lied before him, but there were kabob made from partridge’s meat, different kinds of halva on it, there was a pile of a bunch of grapes, pomegranates, and even oranges and lemons on the gold tables that ripened in Bogi – Vafo (Babur himself draw a plan of this garden in Adinapur). Babur pointed his daughter at oranges and almond halva: take, it’s tasty. The girl refused smiling – I don’t want. She fiddled her gilded buttons on her father’s outer garments.

Some kinds of living creatures were engraved on each of the buttons. A small tiger with eyes, sparkling of two small red grain of ruby, shifted from one foot to the other pliantly on one button. On another – an unusual bird held in its beak a white pearl.

– “Do you like these buttons?”

The girl nodded approvingly.

Babur seized one in his fingers on an upper button, tried to tear it off. But it was sewed firmly and didn’t yield.

– “What are you doing, my sovereign?” – Mohim - begin wondered but having guessed about his purpose, she made a protest:  
– “Don’t tear off! You are spoiling your shah clothes.”

– “That’s no great tragedy; they will order from a jeweller another button and sew it.”

Babur unfastened from his belt a small knife and cut off from a thread the upper button, that where the bird was painted.

He gave the button to Gulbadan and said:

– “Don’t lose. Here is Humo – the bird of happiness. Be happy, my daughter!”

The girl said diligently and feeling embarrassed:

– “Thank you, hazrat<sup>276</sup> ...the sovereign...”

– “Say simply – father, daddy.”

The girl turned to Mohim – begin: “Can I?”

– “Yes, of course!” – She cheered up.

Then Gulbahar clasped with arms her father around the neck and saying: “Daddy, thank you!” – She kissed father’s cheek.

Babur and Mohim – begin exchanged glances touchingly.

– “Guli, tell your daddy hikoya<sup>277</sup> now.”

Gulbadan got down from her father’s knees slowly, stood in front of him and grandly with teacher’s tone began to tell an instructive story about a herdsman that frightened people for nothing with a shout: “Help! Help! Wolves have attacked a herd!”, but when people came running, the herdsman – deceiver laughed at them. But one day wolves really attacked on the herd, the herdsman began to call for help, but nobody believed him now, and “wolves have eaten all the sheep”, – finished the girl with emotion.

– “How smoothly and expressively she tells!” – Babur admired the girl, didn’t take his eyes from her.

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<sup>276</sup> eminence, highness, majesty

<sup>277</sup> a story, a parable

– “Very capable – she memorizes everything that she is read or told, word for word. She likes more prose than poetry. And she tells nicely and smoothly what she will see. Sometimes I think: there are women, poetesses who make verses, but women, who will write about everything they have gone through ... well, as in your book “My past”, are not. May Gulbadan become the first follower of her father?”

– “Oh, how many should endure in order to...” – Suddenly Babur saw, how attentively little Gulbadan looked at her parents, how much trust and child’s interest was in her expressive eyes. She is all ears! Babur stopped quickly. – “If you, dear begin, have noticed this girl’s gift, you will have to think how to develop it. So she will grow up, by that time I may finish the first part of “My Past”, and some suitable passages may be given to rewrite for Gulbadan.”

– “That’s what I want to ask you!” – Mohim got excited suddenly.  
– “My dearest dream that not only sons but your daughters will glorify their names.”

Oh, Mohim, selfless and noble Mohim! They say the truth: It is not that a mother who gave birth, but that woman who could bring up and educate. Babur thought how much children meant for a person in his life, the age of who, as he had at that moment, was over forty. Children that were devoted to their father, - there is no higher good!.. And again – this is a merit of Mohim; it is a proof of her unquenchable love to him, to Babur, although he was guilty towards her. He was guilty because of Gulruh and Dildor.

Babur stood from the kurpacha quickly, took a step to Mohim – begin, embraced her tightly and softly and also kissed her hard and gently into her eyes:

– “Mohim, what happiness that I have you! Let it be me shah but I’m a slave for you! Command me – I will do whatever you want!”

Mohim was confused, whispered: “Gulbadan! Gulbadan is looking!”

Ah, Gulbadan! Babur clasped his hands loudly: hey, the servant, let’s give Gulbadan-begin two Indian parrots!

Rainbow parrots in elegant cages attracted the girl’s attention. Oh, parrots could speak! One of them pattered quickly: “Assalom<sup>278</sup>, begin”. Gulbadan was delighted with it and began to cry in answer:

– “Aleykum – salom!”

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<sup>278</sup> Hello

Both shah and shah's wife and the servant and Robiya - everybody began to laugh. But Gulbadan kissed her father's cheek once more.

Then Babur and Mohim - begin were left alone. When the steps of those who went away calmed down on the stairs, they left ayvan and went to the bed rooms.

In one of them - the biggest and pompously furnished - rose "the shah place", filled with rich Iranian carpets and gold - brocaded blankets. Putting his arm round Mohim's waist, Babur slowly crossed the room, telling his wife softly and excitedly:

- "You still have the same waist as it was at the beginning of our marriage, Mohimjan!"

- "If it is so, it's only because you have remained as a twenty-year - old horseman.

And both cast a passionate look on the door to the next door. There last night... they embraced each other... the flame burned them... their bodies first joined then separated one from another in a tender languor in order to turn again into one creature burning with happiness. They forgot about everything in the world besides love. "The only mine, from the tips of hair to the fingertips - mine, mine, only mine! I will never give him to anybody! - Mohim whispered so. And then at night, he said for the first time that he had recently repeated again: I'm Shah Babur, but before her - I'm a slave! Her slave...

Mohim - not like the thirty seven-year-old woman with youthful ardor in her eye asked:

- "So, will you do everything that I ask you now?"

What can she ask? Can she ask a new country garden or give money for some expensive buying??

Babur answered readily:

- "I ask you, my sovereign", - her voice lost any ardor, - "return our Khumayun to Kabul."

Babur became serious:

- "How is it possible to return? Will it last forever?"

- "As he has already patrolled northern borders. Perhaps, you can replace him?"

- "By whom?" - Babur understood that it would be serious talk, and his ardor went out.

– “Send at least Mirza Kamron. He is sixteen-year-old, Gulruh – begin is proud of him, she assures everybody that he has become a real horseman.”

Babur’s face became gloomy: he endured painfully the quarrels between wives. Gulruh came up to the direct hostility to Mohim and Dildor; she stirred up her children on them. It was dangerous for the future, especially if it comes to Babur’s plans concerning this future.

– “Mohim doesn’t pay much attention to the words of Gulruh – begin. Mirza Kamron won’t manage with this important task. I can trust only Khumayun a great feat, the heir to the throne.”

– “But Gulruh – begin is happy: both her sons live with her in Kabul. But I haven’t seen Khumayun for a year. He is so far from me – two weeks journey on a horse. The bloodthirsty sheybanids are near him. They can attack at any hour. Don’t get me wrong, I’m alarmed all the time.”

– “For nothing, begin, you are alarmed for nothing. I have already told you that three thousands of the selected warriors are with Khumayun. And sheybanids are busy with their internal discords now; they have established peaceful relations with us... But if you miss your son very much... you can see him in two or three weeks.”

– “Where?” – Mohim started, – “In Kabul?”

– “No, in Adinapur.”

Adinapur – it is in the south of the state, close to India. Mohim heard that Babur drew up all his army. Apparently it is convenient for Khumayun passing Kabul to lead his three thousandth army straight to Adinapur.

– “Will you take Khumayun to India?”

Babur would like to keep in secret the preparing campaign. Looking around involuntarily he listened to... There is nobody... But how many people have already known his plan, a new big game which he, restless, organizes. He refused his hope to Mavarannahr; he was looking for his future in the south. He sent his scouts one by one for long ten years in the limits of the sultanate; they made contact with his well – wishers. They were a lot: the envoys of Muslims – rulers and rajahs – Khinduis came to Kabul from India six times. Most of them are discontented by Delhian sultan Ibrahim. They say he ruined his people, broke up his country, the riches of India kept in his own treasury in vain; its improvement was in neglect. Terrible feuds tormented a great country. It needs a power; it needs a name round

which the country would unite. "This name is you, Zahiriddin Babur!"  
The envoys say so...

– "Mohim! I will go there not for a plunder, believe me; I want to create a strong country. This is a dream of my life, you know. I want that science and art, having fallen into decay in Mavarannahr and Khorasan, will rise again...in my state in India. The ruler of Penjab Davlat – khan sent me his son Dilavar – khan. There was an envoy from Indian rajah Rano Sangram Singh. We concluded an agreement about our campaign against Ibrahim Lodi."

Babur was telling not like a husband and a father but like a politician and a sovereign. Mohim – begin involuntarily addressed to him with a simple title:

- "My hazrat, there is a chasm between art and war."
- "We will jump over this chasm!"

– "But how many tears of widows and orphans will be shed to this chasm? I understand that this campaign will be a conquest ("like Sheybani", - nearly passed Mohim's lips, but she held out in time). Thousands of mothers and wives of that country, won't they forgive the death of their sons and husbands?"

– "Aren't sons and husbands of these mothers and wives losing their tens of thousand lives in constant feuds now? Ibrahim Lodi is at war with the ruler of Penjab every year but this ruler ruins his relative Aglam – khan. Sultan Alaviddin hates his rajah - neighbors but they hate him, therewith they don't spare theirs... The country has fallen into decay worse than in Mavarounnahr. Seeing that Mohim-begin remained indifferent to that argument, Babur began to speak to another: Many people escape from there, they seek salvation from us, do you understand it? Do you know that the runaway from Delhi Khindubek has already been serving for five years, you know, don't you? Listen to him, begin. He constantly says that his people crave for getting rid of the division and feuds. Instead of Ibrahim Lodi they want to have the enlightened shah who is capable of uniting the country, raising its grandeur..."

– "If such a sovereign had been from that country the wounds would have skinned over, struck with his sword and he would have been forgiven the inevitable bloodsheds, do you agree? But if a conqueror's sword gives these wounds, even if enlightened but from another country, such wounds don't close up for centuries, they aren't forgiven for centuries. Isn't it, my hazrat?"

These words hit where it hurt. He thought about this contradiction at night, arguing with himself, if he dared or didn't dare to the campaign to India.

Babur got up from the kurpacha quickly.

- "You never know how many wounds that have never healed from the sword of fate that has struck us!?" - He said with irritation. He wanted to drink the wine again. - "I have ordered to bring the wine still on the ayvan, why don't they bring!?"

He clasped his hands with irritation, called the servant. But for some reason there had been no servants at his hands, then Mohim - begin got up quickly. Having thrown back the curtain, she took out a gold jug, two small porcelain Chinese drinking bowls and a plate with oranges from a carved niche. She laid the tablecloth deftly on the table and invited Babur to sit again.

Pouring out a light golden wine to the drinking bowl, Mohim said smiling:

- "Let me take the place of the royal carver, my sovereign. I wish you long happy life!"

The flavored moisture in the drinking bowl, given him by his wife, was quivering. Babur felt that Mohim waited for some words of the heart from him, but there weren't them now. The cold snowstorm of the bellicose thoughts raged in his heart. Sometimes the robbers from the tribe hirilchi appeared before his eyes mentally, - they robbed the strings, going to Kabul, and one could put an end to this evil deed only by the counter campaign... sometimes he enumerated mentally the affairs which will have to do in order to prepare enough corn for a wintering of the ten thousandth army... sometimes his thoughts traveled to Penjab, to the fire of the internal discords that raged there from day to day stronger and stronger and he wanted to get there quickly and set to rights... and then again with anxiety he remembered the unceasing conflicts with numerous nomadic tribes there, in his state, in the west to Kabul... At last he imagined yesterday's scene of the new trials, the extra - heavy guns: some kind of mistake crept into his reckonings, the barrels didn't stand and exploded, having killed five gunners...

Hardly returning to the conversation with his wife, as if making his way through a cold prickly snowstorm, Babur said in some cracked voice:

- "Long quiet life - it is a pipe dream for me, Mohim."

– “No, No! Let God help us: let this dream come true!”

– “May come true... of course... let...”

Babur drained his drinking bowl. He peeled the orange, ate one segment and asked:

– “Mohim, pour some more.”

After the second drinking bowl he felt that the snowstorm moved away somewhere and he felt relieved.

– “Do you know, Mohim, how the cares of the state tear me, all of these viziers, commanders, ambassadors? Sometimes I become like a divided country where the cruel feud goes on. The beks, the ambassadors, the viziers gathered at one of its edge both executions, and raid and wars happened there. Power demands a cold calculation, a mercilessness, an indifference to people's misfortunes from a person. I am used to the power... I begin to enjoy of the power more and more and I feel that I become so hardened that I can't write poems, the wine is warmed up from this coldness.”

– “But what is about another edge?”

– “It is... here today as if I understand that it is. It is you with Khumayun, Khindol and Gulbadan... The life seems to me warmer and purer near you.”

– “But then stay in your edge. Live with us. We will be only too happy from it.”

– “Will leave from affairs of the state; give the power to another person?”

– “Why leave?” – Mohim didn't agree – “You have built a big state here, have unite around Kabul quarreling with each other the lands from Kunduz to Kandagar, from Badahshan to Sind. How many new gardens you have set up in Kabul, how many caravan – sarais you have built have constructed the new channels, have irrigated the vacant lands ... Isn't Kabul dear to you after all of this? ”

– “Yes, I mustn't be so thankless to my fate: I haven't been overtaken by defeat here in Afghanistan. I have found you, Mohim; our children have been born in Kabul. I would like to be satisfied with what I have reached... But I have reached so little. I have my hands still tied. The unsubdued nomadic tribes are everywhere. We have too little income, we live poorly. On what means should I build and improve this rocky country? The remains of Makhmud Gaznevi's dams are here in Gazni – If it reconstructs then a big valley, which is desert now, will begin to blossom again. I wanted to reconstruct this dam

but when I counted all charges... my trifling treasury isn't enough for it, Mohim... What will I support my talents on? There's nothing on, nothing on! Here shah Ismail took Kamoliddin Bekhzod to Tebriz.

Many scientists, architects, poets will come if I invite. I haven't found still a deserving work even for one architect, Mavlyana<sup>279</sup> Fazliddin, who himself has arrived to Kabul. We are poor, we are still at the corner of Dar al-Islam, and do you understand, Mohim? Don't I deserve more, isn't it a large scope for me?"

- "I understand: there are a lot of reasons, carrying you along to India. But you are going to a strange side with a sword. Not like your country man from Horezm Beruni was going to India: you've read in Arabic his "Hindustan", haven't you? Not like your favorite poet Khosrov Dehlavy did."

Babur felt that a cold snowstorm again was waking up in his heart.

- "Mohim, do you want to dissuade me from going to India?"

Of course, Mohim wanted just that, but she understood that her wish was unrealizable. Nevertheless she was going on obstinately:

- "You know by heart many verses of Khosrov Dehlavy. You make them examples of aruz<sup>280</sup> in your book "Muhtasar". You're also a great and real poet and scientist. And I wish with all my heart you leave only good traces in the memory of people. Like Beruni and Khosrov Dehlavy did."

The storm began to rage!

- "Really? You're avoiding saying that I'm still shah." - Babur said coldly. - "As if peoples mention some shah just with only kind words? It doesn't happen, begin<sup>281</sup>. And about myself I heard a lot of praises and abuses! And I've gone through it. Now I'm equally indifferent to both praises and abuses."

Mohim remembered that one of the last distich of Babur expressed the same thought. She doesn't agree with it. She knows that Babur also doesn't think this way all the time, but this thought contains a part of his soul, his truth, such as his present belief and Mohim felt hopeless. Just lately she could tell herself: "He is mine, all mine!" It was recently. But now not a slave was sitting in front of her, but an uncompromising ruler.

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<sup>279</sup> the title of Muslim scientists and theologians

<sup>280</sup> the system of versification

<sup>281</sup> my lady

– "My hazrat<sup>282</sup>, I ask you only one thing: Leave Khumayun in Kabul. As you know during your march somebody must rule over Kabul appanage."

– "You will rule, Mohim begin!"

– "I? I'm just a woman! According to the Sharia sons have more rights than wives. Khumayun will go with you and Mirza Kamron with the brother will stay here. Their rights will be higher than mine."

Babur decided quickly and coldly:

– "I will appoint Mirza Kamron the deputy in Kandahar. He will take Mirza Askar with him. And here old Kasimbek will help you."

It is unbelievable trust and subtle reckoning: at such height Mohim begin will become inaccessible for intrigues of Gulruh-begim. And now is it possible to dispute with him, with Babur, with such kind of trust?

– "Your high trust lifts me to the skies, my hazrat. But you know that I'm not a power-loving person."

– "Power should be given to not power-loving people. Kasimbek will manage the internal affairs and all relations of Kabul with tribes. But he is just executor, and you will rule. Hindol will be with you, and you will also order on his behalf. So everything will correspond to Sharia."

Mohim-begim doesn't need it, this substitution of the shah, for all that it's unnecessary to hide, and it's pleasant for her. Mohim thought that it would be also pleasant for Mirza Kamron, that his father trusted him with the ruling of Kandahar. Yes, her husband can find in people their internal "spring", to awake their interest in something, and if their interest coincides with his accounts and plans, people become sincere leads of accounts and plans, realize intents of Babur with all their heart.

The policy resembles its movement of chessmen on a chessboard. Last year Babur mastered the art of management of his beks and officials. – it was easier and more correct to rule with understanding of their own "springs". Now he has found such "spring" even in the heart of his beloved wife- doesn't high trust of husband and swelling over the rival raise her in her own eyes?

But very soon an anxiety for the son overcame Mohim-begim.

– "My overlord, more than anything else in the world, more than my life I love you and Khumayun. You are going to such perilous

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<sup>282</sup> highness

march, that I'm... I'm afraid. You are a skillful commander, but India – its incalculable number of people, hordes of troops, and the ocean! For the sake of creation of the state, the sea of blood was shed in Mavaranahr and in India..."

Mohim got silent, not daring to say that she wanted: "I'm afraid that this ocean doesn't swallow you!"

Babur thought about the same thing, nights the same ocean frightened him.

– "Battles never happen without blood", - he snapped out resolutely. - "You know it, Mohim. What's the matter with you today?"

– "I fear... I fear for Khumayun ... let Khumayun stay in Kabul, I implore you again!"

Ah, woman, woman! How clear is your unexpressed thought: "If the husband dies, in the battle, let the son survive?"

– "Khumayun is the heir of the throne!" – Babur cried out with annoyance. – "He should be with the army. Why did you forget it was accepted since olden times?"

According to ancient custom of rulers, if the shah dies during the distant march, so the heir should become leader of the army. Otherwise the army could take the side of other probable "contenders" for the throne. Now Babur reminded about this custom. Not saying frankly, he told his wife: "If I'm fated to fall, Khumayun should take the place of mine. That's why I take him with me."

Mohim-beginm understood. It became harder for her. Suddenly she imagined India like country from which no traveler returns. Tears welled up in her eyes.

– "Oh, my God! Why is this world so cruel!"

Babur kept silent.

## NEW BANKS: LAHORE, PANIPAT, DEHLI

### I

The further the army moved the thicker jungle became.

Roots of giant banyans bulged out of the earth, interlacing with low branches again sank into the earth. Thick stems of chaotically creeping lianas hugged stems of trees and formed impenetrable bristled triangles-walls from the heels to the sky. And under feet some creeping herbs and shrubberies hide the ground from the sight.

There is nothing to breathe. The air is closed, humid and obscures the mind.

Babur dressed with a light silk shirt because armours are heavy both for rider and for horse, but for all that he drips with sweat. He is looking at the high tops of banyans: the wind is shaking them, but he isn't penetrating there, to the jungle thickets. He feels giddy, and it seems that some mysterious force walks the horse from side to side.

Every now and then monkeys shout and screech somewhere in the branches. Sometimes annoying and shrill chuck of peacocks is heard.

Suddenly one of the servants shouted, one of those who were leading camels through tangles.

- "What has happened there?"
- "A snake stung."
- "There are cobras, cobras here!"

It's difficult for people, for horses it seems that even its difficult for the wooden bullock carts on which there are cannons.

Alikul with eyes full of anxiety appears before Babur on the horse, smudged with some slush like from a marsh.

- "Sovereign, there is no strength to convey these heavy cannons through the thickets. There are marshes around us as well. All bullock carts are stuck..."

Babur turned towards Tokhir going slightly behind:

- "Bek, ask the guide here!"

The guide Lal Kumar was going ahead on an elephant. He came like this, on the elephant; he decided that it would be faster. Seeing the elephant the sorrel horse of Babur began worrying, shouting, but Lal Kumar stopped the huge animal at a distance, whispered something in its large ear and the elephant lifted up its trunk and helped its master to come down. After that Lal Kumar came up, brought his folded hands to the forehead and bowed before Babur. He said in Farsi:

- "This road won't do for us. It's necessary to find the other one."
- "Oh, the great shah, we are in Punjab and all five rivers have overflowed. All other roads are under the water."
- "It's known to us that there are a lot of roads in Punjab. And such roads that it's possible to pass on bullock carts and here our carts are stuck. Did we lose our way?" - "No, no, the great shah! Where are your victorious bullock carts stuck? Allow my elephant to pull them out. You should go. You shouldn't stay. If you go today and tomorrow we will come to good roads. Lahore is already at a short distance."

— “Take the elephant; let it pull out the bullock carts”, — Usta<sup>283</sup> Alikul bowed before Babur. Lal Kumar is light a bag of bones. With the help of the black elephant-giant he climbed to its back. He sent the elephant on Alikul to the bullock carts, driving on the elephant by blows of heels and rare touches in the chest by iron rod with a bent tip.

The mighty elephant dragged them out of the abyss quickly and without any difficulty.

On one of the carts the servant stung by snake was lying, moaning. It's doubtful whether he will come out with his life, but for all that companions put round the place of sting with healing plants and in order that the poison not spread very fast in his body , tightened his legs by lasso, holding back blood flowing.

Again soldiers suffering began squeezing their way through the tangle. And again the elephant of Lal Kumar was ahead.

The troops were going slowly and for a long time. The air became stuffier. It was more difficult to breathe.

At noon Hindubek with a hundred armed people appeared on the bank of Ravi River.

Hindubek was a descendent from Delhi's nobility. Not coming to an understanding with Ibrahim, he went to Kabul and took service with Babur seven years ago. He has already turned forty, but he wasn't inferior to young men in which Babur received evidence during his last Indian march, which was tentative, but Hindubek attracted Babur not only by his courage, but also by his intention to finish with the atomism of his country and wanted to reach this goal without additional bloodshed. Hindubek knew well Turkic and Farsi, was quite educated and so he became one of the beks with whom Babur liked to set the pace sincerely. By the way during last march the town Briha on the bank of Jilam river opened its gates to Babur without a blow, owing to intelligent mediation of Hindubek. After that Hindubek was put as a deputy to this rich district. Now Babur hopped to capture Lahore just as peacefully. Hindubek was negotiating about it with emir of Lahore whom, it seems, was inclined to acknowledge the supremacy of Babur under him.

Babur recognized Hindubek from far away and turned aside the horse from the road passing the soldiers forward, the conversation should take place aside.

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<sup>283</sup> the master

- "Sovereign, the intentions of Davlat-khan are bad", – Hindubek began immediately – "He is going to deal shortly with me, I ran away."
    - "Why has he changed so much?" – Babur tried to ask calmly. – "But earlier he sent his son Dilavar-khan to us to Kabul and that has arranged with us... I respected Davlat-khan for his grey hair!"
    - "Davlat-khan has forgotten about all this. He hooked on the belt two swords. It was Dilavar-khan who has explained me the meaning of it: he whets one sword against Sultan Ibrahim and another one against you."
    - "Is his son also hostile to us?"
    - "No, he isn't, Dilavar-khan is benevolent, he remembers the arrangement, he wants to surrender Lahore to us without a blow, in order to show his devotion. It was he who saved me from death, he has forewarned that the father had planned to deal shortly with me... but the elder son Gazy-khan is on the side of the father."
    - "And Olam-khan?"
    - "He is afraid of Ibrahim... He has suffered a defeat from Delhi's sultan, now he is afraid of fighting. But when you arrive at Lahore he will appear, I think, with expressions of faithfulness. The main obstacle is Gazy-khan. He has more influence upon beks from his father. If we overpower him all beks will be on your side. I believe you will receive Lahore without a blow. But why are you going along such a bad road?"
    - "The guide is leading us, he was sent to us by Punjabi allies."
    - "Where is this guide? Let me sound him."
- Again the guide was sent. Lal Kumar sitting on the elephant with the permission of interlocutor has touched the forehead by hands, bowed to Hindubek. He was greeted with the same Hindu way, stood erect in the saddle and asked (in Hindu):
- "Where are you from?"
  - "I'm from Agra, sahib<sup>284</sup>."
  - "And how did you find yourself in Punjab?"
  - "I was looking for a job... it's necessary to feed."
  - "Didn't you find a job with such elephant at Sultan Ibrahim Lody?"
  - "Ibrahim Lody is stingy. He gathered all gold and hatched it, he doesn't want to spend it. In desperation we all..."
  - "It's true." – Hindubek didn't restrain himself.

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<sup>284</sup> Addressing in the meaning "master"

– “I ran away from oppressions of this Lody. The father of present Ibrahim Iskander blamed my father for insubordination. And also he executed him and threw him under the feet of an infuriated elephant.”

The face of the guide expressed the favour to the interlocutor. He asked:

– “Are you Kshatria?”

– “Yes, my real name is Indri. Shah Babur calls me Hindubek. Everybody liked this name... And I also liked. And what is your name?”

– “Lal Kumar.”

– “So, Lal Kumar, who do you think will deliver us from oppressions of Lody?”

– “God will do it.”

– “And from mortals who will do?”

Lal Kumar has become thoughtful.

– “Davlat-khan?” – Hindubek gave a hint.

– “Davlat-khan is a generous man. And Gazy-khan is better than Ibrahim.”

Hindubek asked lowering his voice:

– “Please tell the truth, why are you leading the troops of Babur along this road?”

– “Gazy- khan ordered so.”

– “And why Gazy- khan directs them to the way where it's impossible to pass?”

– “It's the best way for them. It's the right way.”

– “What have they done badly?”

– “Wasn't Ibrahim Lody enough for us? Now one more oppressor is going! And then he's a stranger!”

– “Gazy- khan deceived you!”

Lal Kumar sharply turned the elephant to tangles and shouted:

– “These strangers are occupants and murderers. They killed three thousand of ours in the stronghold Bashur. They sacked our towns and villages!” – And he rushed into the depths of forest with such words...

– “Sovereign, order to catch this guide! He was sent by enemies!

He led you along the wrong, destructive road...”

– “Grip him!” – Babur shouted angrily.

– “Quickly! To grip immediately!”

Riders rushed after the elephant. Three of them managed to run to intercept him.

But the guide made the elephant turn to riders by quick slashes of the iron twig, ordered it something and everybody saw with horror two or three persecutors fall prostrate on the ground from the blow of the trunk, and the third raising horse shrink back and disappear in the forest.

The elephant infuriated by fight and driving on, sounded awfully and tearing thick lianas, breaking branches with a snap, also disappeared in the forest.

- "Shoot!" - Babur shouted.

But the forest hindered archers to expend: some successful arrows already being at the end of the trajectory hit the elephant, but didn't injure its skin much, and while shots of gun were striking fire from firestone, were lighting fuses, were sighting their heavy arms... Lal Kumar became inaccessible for them.

- "To put injured soldiers to the bullock cart, to finish off horses!" - Babur ordered. - "The villain should get his bitters! Encircle him! In circumvention of the forest, quickly!"

It's a desperate undertaking! There are many tangles and bogs around...

- "Hindubek, now you will be our guide."

- "I serve you faithfully, sovereign!"

Towards the evening Hindubek led the troops to the spacious green valley. Babur was tired infinitely and ordered to put there his marquee, to rest everybody. Soon unlucky persecutors of Lal Kumar appeared: their clothes were torn to shreds, horses were splashed with mud, and they themselves could stick on a horse hardly at all...

In the morning a small detachment of about fifty men of Davlat-khan came to Babur's stop; they came from Lahore to express devotion and obedience to Babur. Guards were ordered to let men from Lahore into the camp, but Babur admitted only Dilavar-khan to him. Babur seated him among his most influential beks, gave him the time of day. At last he asked frankly and sharply:

- "Dear, why did your father whom I respected no less than my father break the agreement and embark on the path of enmity? Why is he whetting his sword against us?"

Dilavar-khan answered frankly too:

– “My sovereign, my brother Gazy-khan offended our father. He intimidated the father: if strange troop comes here we will lose Lahore. He told that Shah Babur was the same enemy for us like Ibrahim Lody was!”

– “And grey-haired Davlat-khan sends the guide- deceiver to us so that we would stifle in the wild wood, isn’t it so?”

– “No, it isn’t so, my sovereign. My father doesn’t know about this mean intent. It is doing of Gazy-khan. Otherwise the father wouldn’t come here himself. He is there, at the entry of your marquee, he is waiting. My father doesn’t want the bloodshed; believe me, he hopes for your clemency to Lahore... and to all of us, my sovereign.”

– “Only you, Dilavar, deserve it, only you! As for your father he will be punished and it will be fairly. The prophet entrusted us with punishing enemies and supporting friends, didn’t he?” – Babur turned to the head of the guard: – “Recently they say that Davlat-khan goes at once with two sabres on his hip. Let’s admire them ... Bring him here with his sabres on the appropriate place.”

Two strong soldiers nearly carried the white-bearded Davlat-khan into the marquee squeezing the wrists of the old man. He endeavoured to break away, was twitching all over and two sabres hung on his neck were swinging and bumping each against another. The beks laughed quietly. Davlat-khan looking straight at Babur shouted:

– “I wasn’t captured. I came myself to you, it was my own free will. And I see your perfidy and cruelty!”

– “Who speaks about perfidy?” – Babur raised his voice. – “You wanted to deal shortly with Hindubek, but he came to you in the capacity of ambassador from me! Whom Gazy-khan pushed to an abyss of marshes and whose son is he, and with the knowledge of whom he acted? Somebody wanted to ruin us! And it was you who wanted it! To merciless people are also merciless!” – Babur stopped for a moment.

– “Hey, vizier, take this man and send out him and his family to Bhira. To keep him in the Milvat stronghold! Lahore will do without him!”

Davlat-khan knelt on the ground: his legs didn’t hold him. The soldiers dragged the emir of Lahore to the exit. And two other guards appeared quickly as if out of the ground and came behind the back of Dilavar-khan who was on the point of rising from his seat.

## II

The autumn has already passed, the winter has been nearly over and trees were standing in the green attire. The valleys of India were spacious boundless and wonderful in every season:

Babur was moving forward slowly, carefully along Jamuna in the direction of Delhi. He stopped for the decisive battle in Panipat; it's situated approximately in fifty versts to the north from the capital of the sultanate. And Ibrahim Lody was leading quickly here his huge army (two hundred thousand) and battle elephants from the sight of Agra. Last year he had the luck to defeat the forty thousand army of Olam-khan, Dilavar-khan and other his "local" enemies at the threshold of Delhi. Now Babur has twelve thousand soldiers at most. Not only Babur was afraid of the huge numerical superiority of Delhi's sultan. The beks conversed in whispers: in the case of defeat we all will die in the immense foreign place, nobody will hide; there is no hope on salvation. But there were other voices. Many of them laid their hopes on fighting experience and generalship of Babur and of course on the cannons and guns of Usta Alikul: Ibrahim doesn't have such arms. Takhir, now he was always close to the bek's top, knew that with the help of the cannons and guns Babur attempted to repulse an attack of battle elephants which usually decided the outcome of battles in India and which he didn't have in his army.

They found the appropriate place between Panipat city and Jamuna River – from here it is comfortable to make firing. The bullock carts were placed in a semicircle, all seven hundred which they had, concatenated them with solid lassos twisted from oxides. Impenetrable arrows shields were placed ahead carts and in narrow ruptures between them.

Babur had time for preparing for the battle, in order to dictate its process then and not to submit to the enemy's will.

Gunners and shots were training their skills. And a war ruse was prepared, the bullock carts were standing in the hill's slope and so that they wouldn't roll down by themselves, wooden rests were placed under their wheels and so Babur leading the maneuvers from the hill, orders to take away simultaneously all rests; he wanted to strive that at the appropriate moment of the battle all carts moved forth and down in one heavy chain.

Takhir galloped to the most distant tip of the chain of carts to pass the commander's order. Foot soldiers, gunners, armourers of fire, they all were ready. Alikul also waved his hand from a high, visible place:

– “Down with rests! Forward carts!”

But the general uniform motion didn't come out: some carts moved about not at once, others bounced down by themselves (here and there leather lassos were torn). The chain was becoming crooked, went zigzag overturning thin shields gripped by iron.

– “Stop!” – Babur gave new command. – “Repeat everything! And Usta Alikul, repeat it until not a single lasso will break and not a single shield will overturn!”

The soldiers, sweating began dragging carts up the hill on the former place.

Other soldiers tried to shirk hard work, but foremen railed mercilessly and even hit idlers.

– Do not pity soldiers during exercises” - it was Babur's strict order, otherwise they will die in vain during the fight.

Babur went downhill and made his way to the river to deep ditches which were traps for elephants. They were dug and covered with branches beforehand: here and there even earth fills were made from sand on these branches.

Takhir who guarded Babur by virtue of office should accompany him everywhere. Looking at hidden ditches he thought to himself: “It will be good if the enemy goes upon us right here. And if he decides to go around the reinforced camp...”

But it turned that Babur took into account everything.

Scouts found out thoroughly: marshes and tangles approaching Panipat from flanks are so that a large army won't be able to get over them.

On the right there is the high- water Jamuna. On the left from the eminence where Babur was standing there was the populous city Panipat with narrow streets. The only thing to do for the enemy is to go straight, to go right through. Everything would depend on how all these ditches and carts can weaken the impact of the army, surpassing their own army almost tenfold...

In the first years living in Kabul Takhir missed Andijan and Kuva. Now he remembers Kabul and missed it! In Kabul he has the house where his Robiya, his son Safar, the uncle Fazliddin had lived 15

years. Sometimes Takhir before the fighting thought about anything, but not about the death. Now Takhir is praying: "Oh, Allah, don't let me die in this battle! If I survive for this time I will put an end to the service. I've risen on it, it's true, but my years are nearly fifty. Till when should I go through trials in strange lands? Safar has already become a horseman, this year he will finish madrasah, will become muhandis (the master in construction). It's possible to marry him, one can say, to add to one head one more head.. Oh, Allah, am I destined to celebrate my son's wedding? Will I see my Robiya? Don't let me die, the Most High!"

The wine stilled the melancholy and fear, unbearable reflection. Though in India grapes were cultivated in few places, so there was little wine there; beks managed with the strong vodka from mahva leaves.

The day before the marked battle Takhir had a lot of this alcohol.

At dawn he woke up broken. His body ached, he had a bitter taste in the mouth, and the head was heavy and ached. He tried to fall asleep again, but he was turning to no purpose. Then he stood up and drank the remains of the vodka, three-four sips from the bottom of a jug.

And this moment drums began beating, trumpets began sounding. "fall in, fall in!" - Shout-orders were heard. Patrol men have brought the information about fast approach of Ibrahim Lody's army.

Takhir dressed and put on his boots long enough under the weather. One-eared Mamat, his current groom by right of the old friendship and age seniority sometimes allowed himself to grumble like it was today:

- "Eh, bek, for what did you need to drink at the crack of dawn?"

- "Shut your mouth! And better bring me the gray horse... And quickly, you, broad skeleton!"

Mamat really has lost much weight in the march. "It will be easier for him to run with horses!" - Takhir thought.

Usually if a horse is left straddled during the night, a girth is weakened. Mamat couldn't catch at once the horse which has got lost at night and caught; he forgot to tighten the girth in his flurry. Takhir also was in a hurry; he had to come to Babur quickly and not looking at stirrups, backed the horse at a jump. It has moved restlessly under him and if Takhir were sober, he would feel that the saddle was fixed badly, but he thought that it has seemed to him from the morning

after. Resting his soles against stirrups, the horseman has turned sharply the horse, the grey's strength increased from good food during the night and the horse has reared, the saddle suddenly began crawling under his belly and Takhir fell on the ground.

Mamat rushed to him, snatched the horse's reins and with the other hand he began helping Takhir to stand up. He said laughing:

– “Eh, Takhirjan, how you became the bek you used to hit the bottle. Oh, I was right when I told you not to drink it much!”

Takhir has fallen on the soft ground and didn't hurt himself. But it's bad omen to fall from a horse before an important battle. He cursed spitefully and pointed Mamat to the saddle, the limp girth.

Mamat hit his forehead with the fist still laughing:

– “Eh, I've forgotten in a hurry, empty-headed!”

The alcohol was making Takhir a distraction. He was offended by the groom's jeers, it seemed to him the Mamat had set up this falling, that he decided to jeer at the “noble” bek. If he were a soldier as it was before it was the very likelihood that he would laugh at the incident. But now he is bek, bek!

– “So you've done it on purpose, haven't you, skeleton? You envy that I've become the bek, don't you? You wanted my death, didn't you?”

All trembling from anger, not looking, he began touching his belt- where is a lash? It was lying on the ground, it was the rule to abuse and beat a soldier guilty in something. The bek Tokhir followed this rule partly, but there wasn't a case when he raised his hand against Mamat and their old friendship.

Mamat bowed to take the lash, picked it up and gave Tokhir:

– “Take it and beat me for my fault, but don't say so! I'm not a villain to wish your death!”

And again it seemed to Takhir that Mamat was jeering at him showing his loftiness, his honesty, placing himself above the bek.

– “Isn't it the wish of my death to throw me down from the horse before the battle?!” – he shouted and spit and beat Mamat on the head by fist.

Mamat was thrown back by the blow. He couldn't keep his feet and fell. Something crunched in the first finger, he had a stabbing pain in his right hand, and it was almost in the depth of the brain as it seemed to him. “I've broken my finger! How will I hold a sabre now? Oh, and it has happened because of him, him!” and Takhir beat once

more by the left hand and again threw down on the ground the almost raised Mamat.

Some tall soldier stood up for Mamat:

– “Don’t do so, bek, forgive him this time! Mamat is ready to sacrifice his life for you! And as for the girth I’ll tighten it at once...Please, wait a little bit...it’s done. Sit down, bek!”

Takhir was going and always looked at his swollen finger, while you move it ached very much.

“That’s all; the run of luck went against me!” – Takhir thought approaching the place where Babur’s suite was gathering quickly.

Twenty soldiers were galloping behind Tokhirkbek and also Mamat was among them, he was pale as a ghost. No matter how your bek railed, how he beat you, a soldier mustn’t fall behind him.

The sun has risen from the left bank of Jamuna and moved to its zenith lighting up files of the countless army of Delhi’s sultan. It seemed these files captured the whole horizon. These files were dense, regular. Only in gaps between them there were fighting elephants, but their hugeness was less evident at the look from the hill where Babur was standing with his suite, but the number of them might make one tremble. Somewhere there Ibrahim Lody was sitting on the biggest white elephant; this elephant replaced the hill of observation for him. He could see the whole battlefield from the back of the huge animal. The menacing enemy moved. Babur was controlling his temper. The chain of carts and shields was strong. His son, clever and fearless Khumayun is responsible for the right flank of the army. Khoja Kalonbek, Hindubek and other reliable and tried commanders were with Khumayun. Gunners, shots and foot army were in the center. On both sides there were horsed detachments ready to the vertical attack of holding. The Sultan Ibrahim, who is on the fighting elephants, has a lot of infantry, too much. It must move with dense files, therefore it’s awkward. Here tuglama will be of use, it was the strong arm of Sheybany in former times. And now it also belongs to Babur. At the ends of his army’s wings there are the fastest horses.

Takhir is standing a little bit behind Babur with the suite and the security of shah. Not far from the shah there were beks responsible for the connection between files, heralds. The voice of Babur ordering something is assured and discrete. “We went after this man and from

so many battles we survived. – Takhir calmed himself- If Mirza Babur is alive I also will survive”.

It's difficult to wait without movement, without any attempt of resistance for an approaching black cloud. Many beks are worrying; Babur from time to time told calmly, distinctly and powerfully:

– “Endure... wait...nobody should start.”

Ibrahim Lody saw that Babur was standing behind a wall of carts and protective installations and didn't go ahead. And he also has stopped his army. He didn't know whether to begin a frontal attack. No, according to his commanders' advice he orders to reorganize the files in order to deliver the main blow not in the center, but on the right flank to break it and go round the upland from the town side.

But while the order was spread among the one-hundred-thousandth army, while some detachments were gathering in the concentrated force aimed against Babur's right flank and the others have turned to the town side, a lot of time passed.

Babur has made a return motion. Two thousand cavalry rushed in a whirl by Ibrahim Lody's left flank, by aimed “fist” of the enemy, its elephants and the infantry which were moving from the center to the left, in the enemy's rear! And the cavalry of Khumayun went to meet from its right side blocking the way, impeding the reorganization. Here cannons began roaring placed in the center between carts which were still immovable.

Yes, Babur used all his military experience acquired in victories and, alas, in hard defeats here on the Panipat field. For the time being Babur pursued an aim to mix the enemy's files by quadrilateral, though frail encirclement to break the accuracy of its files, to turn them inside, to make a bustle. The enclosed army excelled those who encircled it tenfold, horses were faster but weaker, Ibrahim's soldiers were tearing the encirclement now on the right now on the left. Of course Babur was sending help, files from the center where it was too difficult for his horsemen. But the main thing that it was enticing help, he opened on purpose that central area where carts were standing before the enemy. At last Ibrahim beating off the persistent blows from the sides and from behind, sent the main forces, the most part of fighting elephants to this area up the slope to break here and to decide the battle his way. And then Babur has ordered to take away rests from the carts wheels.

Seven hundred carts began to move at the same time and rolled to the enemy's files. Cannons and guns began to hit sultan's elephants and infantry already from the near distance. A crash of firing was deafening, a smoke and soot were preventing to see , balls and scorching bullets punched holes in armours and shields, and incredibly concerted, becoming faster movement of countless carts, suddenly turned into some monstrous, alive creations which broke, destroyed, got down, spread panic and fear among Ibrahim's soldiers. They weren't ready for it. Elephants began rushing about, sounding angrily as they were injured and frightened like they fell in a trap; drivers tried to turn them and only have brought more chaos, worsened the crush in which people and horses fell on the ground, were gasping.

Cannons and guns continued their terrible and devastating work. A lot of injured or dead elephants already were lying in the slope. Their death was attended by the death of many trampled down and crushed soldiers. And from below, files of Ibrahim's infantry were going still, pressing the horsed detachments, were going, not being able to stop, were sliding one after another and piling new blockage of dead and crippled people.

At last Ibrahim Lody's army turned back: the flight began quickly, people crushed fallen men and threw arms. Babur's cavalry has thinned out in the edges of the huge battle and its rear; it wasn't able to hold back this pressure anymore. Elephants easily have broken through it, after them were deep crowds of the enemy's infantry.

Babur has seen it from the hill.

– "The enemy can go away and lock himself up in Delhi!" – He shouted and turned to his beks of communication. But all these beks and heralds were there in the affair, they were sent there one by one and haven't returned from the fight yet. And who knows who of them survived, the fighting was to death. Babur turned his horse to his own security.

– "Takhirbek, I must know whether Ibrahim Lody ran away or he is on the field. If he ran away we'll sent a reserve in chase of the enemy."

Takhir at once covered the picture of the battle at a glance, this hell in the smoke and dust, he felt for a moment a strange unused fever of fear for his body, he tried to hide it, but his voice quavered:

– "I'm ready to carry out your order, my sovereign!"

Some herald has galloped at that moment. The blood from the injured leg was running on the stirrup, not dismounting from the horse, the herald began shouting:

- "My sovereign, the victory is ours! The enemy is going away!"
- "Ibrahim also?"
- "Yes, I've seen his white elephant among those which were running back! Ibrahim has gone away!"
- "Takhirbek, stay here please! Kasimtay-mirza!"

A bek of forty came forward, he was large, strong.

This bek was born and grew up in Turkestan, he was some distant relative of Timur's roots ruler. He served Babur already fifteen years.

- "If Ibrahim manages to reach Delhi or Agra and to lock himself up in one of the strongholds, the war will begin again", - Babur said to Kasimtay,
- "But we want to enter Delhi and Agra without a blow...Kasimtay-mirza, I give you a thousand from the reserve... Also take Bobo-chuhra with his soldiers... Takhirbek's detachment... pursues Ibrahim; till Delhi or if he runs to Agra, till Agra pursue him!"
- "I'll carry out this highest order even at the cost of my life!"
- "You're my hope! May God speed you! Overwhelm and you'll be invincible!"
- "Amen!"

It's honorably to be among the first in the victor battle! Takhir stopped feeling pain in the finger. In the lead of his soldiers he galloped in the first file of Kasimtay's detachment.

The sun was in its zenith. The very hot day tormented both those who were drawing back and those who were pursuing. The enemies were drawing back at random, but they still were strong.

Where is the white elephant, where is it?

Maybe Sultan Ibrahim has changed from the elephant to a horse?

Kasimtay and Takhir went round from two sides the broken enemy's detachment, which became a discordant crowd, smashed it and captured several elephants' drivers. Kasimtay addressed to captives through the Indian, who fought for Babur:

- "Tell them: if they show at which side is the detachment with Ibrahim Lody, I'll disenthral them."

One of the captives answered ardently and with diligence:

- "He says the white elephant of Ibrahim has fallen at the height of the fighting, sultan himself is dead." - The translator explained.

But Kasimtay didn't believe it. He said severely:

- "Our people have seen Ibrahim run. Tell him to tell the truth; otherwise he'll lose his head!"

But the captive repeated again: Ibrahim was killed on the battlefield. Another captive supposed that Ibrahim might be in the big crowd of the broken detachments which have taken wing, going away along the river. The third pointed to those who were going away from the right side.

Kasimtay has sent all captives with elephants under escort to Babur's hill. And he himself rushed for the retreating army along the river. Catching them he saw the relative military order saved: elephants and horsemen were going on each side. They were rajputs, they were considered brave and skillful soldiers by rights. Kasimtay has gone round them from the river side; Bobo-chuhra and Takhir have gone from the right side. The rajputs saw that there weren't many pursuing men, took their bows and sabres, they were brought to bay.

Takhir put an arrow on the bow at full tilt, raised the arm, aimed, but when he tried to nock felt that his first finger didn't work. He had to hold a bow string and arrow's plume by fourth and little fingers. Nevertheless the shot was successful: a dark-skinned soldier from those who were galloping, going to meet them with exposed sabres, has fallen on the horse mane. But Takhir couldn't shoot once more: rajputs were galloping very fast. Among them a soldier of powerful view with raised chakra was notable. Takhir unsheathed the sabre, rushed towards them intending to beat a raised enemy's hand. The enemy has evaded the sabre with ringing stroke the chakra and a sharp pain ran through Takhir's finger, no him all! Takhir even didn't notice how his sabre has fallen from his hands. He intended to pass through rajput, wanted to take his dagger, but the chakra has fallen, from the shoulder to the neck, then to the chin, the wave of sharp pain poured, put out the previous pain, everything went dark before his eyes. He also fell on the horse mane...second strong stroke...armours saved him! Tokhir thought "until he knocks me down, you won't leave me!" - he began praying for some reason: "to lose my senses faster!"

Mamat saved Takhir from the third mortal stroke. He knocked the Rajput down by a pole axe. He managed to catch Takhir who was

slowly slipping down from the horse. This way the two of them leapt out of the horse fight.

### III

Khumayun entered Delhi first; he occupied a huge intracity stronghold with red walls without a blow; he has sealed Ibrahim Lody's treasury. And he himself went to see the city with three hundred soldiers.

It was huge, immense country, the huge, endless city!

There were low hills in Delhi, but in general the city was situated in the plain green area. There were houses without count, but there were very few people on the streets: Delhi inhabitants were sitting at home were looking through chinks, fearing stranger-conquerors.

On the bank of Jamuna, the holy river of Hindus there is a group of people which sends the funeral ceremony. Dead men are put on firewood poured with aromatic oils, dead bodies are burned and the ash is thrown to the river. It sends the ash to the eternity... Occupied with the ceremony like directed by their spirit toward the other world these people tried not to pay attention to the affairs of this transitory world, even to the strange army which had occupied their city.

At bazaars Khumayun saw barefooted boys and women move to and fro between opened stores, whose hands and necks were decorated by flower garlands. They were barefooted and with flowers. It was very unusual.

– “We’re at Channy Chook bazaar”, – Hindubek explained walking near Khumayun. – “It means “The moon crossing”.”

– “Is the khait<sup>285</sup> today? Why do they have so many flowers?” – Khumayun asked.

– “Yes, today is the holiday, the holiday of spring sowings. People ask gods for good harvest. There are a lot of khaits in India. They have holidays each month.”

– “It’s a strange country!” – Khumayun shrugged his shoulders.

Long-legged, flexible and light monkeys of white and ash grey color, but with black legs and muzzles and light-purple hair on belly were walking along the walls and roof of some old palace. Their cubs were gamboling, they jumped incomprehensibly quickly from roofs to banyans’ and palm’s branches. Pursuing each other, monkeys were

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<sup>285</sup> a religious holiday

going down on the ground. People were going round the palace and its internal yard, but nobody paid attention to monkeys.

The eyes of one bek from Khumayun's suite lit up with the hunting passion. The bek was just about to take a blow.

– "It's considered a great sin to shoot monkeys. It'll cause a disaster to a person"; – Hindubek's voice was impassive, ostensibly impassive.

Khoja Kalonbek riding on the right of Khumayun asked with a smile:

– "We should take care even of cows, shouldn't we, venerable Hindubek?"

– "Things which don't come easy are the holy ones", – Hindubek answered seriously. – "It isn't easy to rear a cow in Indian heat. And its five gifts are pleasing to Shiva god."

Khumayun said pacifically:

– "We'll remember our sovereign's order to respect Indian customs and not to admit acts which might wound the honour and dignity of the population."

Khoja Kalonbek put his right hand on the breast:

– "My amirzoda<sup>286</sup>, the sovereign's order is the law for all of us! I just let myself to joke a little bit on our friend highly distinguished Hindubek."

Ahead the horsemen saw a high granite minaret through high trees above them.

– "It's Kutb Minor", – Hindubek said respectfully.

They came up to the minaret. Khumayun jumped off his horse and with beks he has climbed up the top of the building. From above it was seen more clear people crowded round a black pole in a hundred steps which had a height of poplar.

– "What is it?" – "This pole is made of one piece of iron. As experts say the pole is six hundred years old. A person who embraced it will manage to combine both hands is lucky, because his cherished wish will realize."

Khumayun kept himself gravely among beks as yet, but heard such thing said with ardour peculiar to youth:

– "Let's try!" – And rushed downstairs of the minaret.

– "Dear Hindubek, show me how should I embrace the pole."

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<sup>286</sup> the ruler's inheritor

A lower part and a top of the pole were black and the middle part was shot with metallic light shine because of touching of uncountable hands and backs.

Hindubek hugged the pole with his back pulling off his hands back. But however hard he tried to touch the fingers of the both hands back behind the pole, he couldn't manage to do it at all.

The beks burst out of laughing.

Khumayun also laughed. He tried to do what Hindubek couldn't manage. But he also couldn't do it. The beks and soldiers also tried to become lucky. But it was a vain attempt. At last one long-armed and thin horseman from Samarqand managed to embrace the pole and for it he got a handful of silver coins from Khumayun.

Among winners were on the streets those who were noting loth to pick up and to have better spoils. Yar Hussein, who had been a brigand before, robbed travelers on roads to the south from Khaybar gates, and now a forgiven bek, dreamt about such spoil. He heard many times about rich Hindu temples and because of it his soldiers at once got into the temple uptown.

Oh, how many things were there! There was uncountable number of jewels alone at the bottom and on the faces of Hindu gods' statues.

Shades were playing on the temple's walls faced with white yellow marble. An old priest put hands shut together to the forehead with concentration stood still with tears at a huge stone statue of four-faced Shiva dancing on people's skulls. Women, old men and teenagers who came here to pray, were standing silently before their God and bowed calmly their heads.

To disperse infidels! And Yar Husseinbek's soldiers rushed to the statue pushing away and flinging worshipers on the ground. They have brought a ladder and climbed to the god's faces, - faithful soldiers were attracted by the large ruby in the Shiva god's forehead, it was a bloody red mole.

Khumayun caught the robbers at the scene of the crime.

These words translated by Hindubek were listened with attention. People nodded their agreement; they were concentrated, silent and bowing. After Khumayun went away, Brahman again stood with palms put on the forehead before God's statue, now it was necessary to thank for salvation, it was necessary to convince the

parishioners that the greedy stranger who has encroached on the holy ruby was punished by the will of Shiva- Ruda, only by his divine will!

#### IV

In the valleys far from India, in Syrdarya the beginning of spring month savr is the time when scarlet tulips just started to blossom out. And on the Jamuna's bank there was already unbearable heat, as it was in Maveranahr in full swing in the summer.

Babur was on the horse right in the sun the whole day and to the evening his body was incandesced like a copper jug under rays of the start of day. Being languid with the heat Babur decided to go to Jamuna's bank.

Besides the heat the flame of maynob<sup>287</sup> which he has drunk burned him a lot in the afternoon. The beks have already got accustomed to drink a lot in Kabul, and here almost every day they made feasts, of course in the honour of the "great victory", won by the "great shah" in Panipat.

Maynob and other wines (he had them all on end and in turn) left after them compressive pain in the chest, helost sleep during hot and stuffy nights. After such drinking about in the morning he sometimes spitted blood. The doctor Yusufy who treated him from Herat entreated him to flee from the bottle. And Babur himself often pining with hard insomnia took the pledge from the wine. But during the day if he had bad mood or on the contrary some good event happened he again had a letch for a glass. And when he began it, as soon as he was in the state of pleasant intoxication the beks used to offer him to continue it under any possible pretext – and Babur accepted their offer easily in such moments. It has happened like today, Babur still tipsy from the vine which he had in the afternoon according to the tremble and weakness in his body, said to the beks: "Let's feast tonight on the river in the coolness"...

Babur directed his steps to Jamuna's bank ahead of his suit.

There were people, especially old men and women, among those there were people dressed in drahman's clothes.

The ceremony of funeral burning... How is it held?

But seeing the strangers Hindus evidently frightened by gossips about awful battle at Panipat and destruction of captives began going away. Only three people left at the dead body which should be burnt:

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<sup>287</sup> a type of vine

young widow, her mother and bent Brahmin. Babur gave a glance at the dead body lying on the wooden dais. Of course he was from those rajputs who were captured by Khumayun in Panipat. He brought about two hundred people. Babur knew that rajputs weren't acquainted with cannons and harquebus - the bullet tufangs<sup>288</sup> unsettled their rows, and they were standing shoulder to shoulder not believing that one can kill a person with some invisibly mortal thing from such a long distance.

And Babur said to captives:

- "They say your Shiva has a third eye which opens during divine anger. So Shiva's fire, anger's fire killing from the distance is in your hands! You will convince of it now..."

And he waved his hand to the shots. A hundred shots rang out and a hundred rajputs fell on the eyes of another hundred rajputs. Babur set free the second hundred to the winds - go and tell that Babur has the might of angry Shiva.

The widow knew how her husband died after the battle. The grief and sorrow fettered her young face. She unbound her thick hair, its wave pointed stronger the beauty of this woman. Babur looked at her face, there was a suspension from the whole earth, the seal of close death in her large wonderful eyes.

According to the custom, a wife of a dead man had to be a widow the whole life or be burned alive at the same fire which would turn to ash the remains of her husband. This woman chose the second one.

The old Brahman brought the torch and firewood blazed at once: they were poured with the oil of a special composition. The widow made her first jerky movement to the fire, but stepped back involuntarily.

Babur said to Hindubek:

- "Indeed she will rush to the fire? How absurd to ruin a living beauty for the sake of the dead body? Order Brahman in the name of mine... he should stop... Let them take her!"

Hindubek shook his head with doubt, but driving a horse, came up to the fire and told Brahman the order.

Suddenly the woman turned to Babur:

- "Is it he the shah of the conquerors?" - She asked and Babur understood even not knowing the language what she asked and what she began to shout after a moment: "for what reason did you come

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<sup>288</sup> A type of bullet guns, used at that period

here?! Because of your order my husband was killed. If you're like Shiva return him his life! He's my life and I will live if he lives...

Hindubek didn't want to translate these words, but he did.

– “Can a mortal person revive a dead person?” – Babur made a helpless gesture and at locum flapped with arms: – “Hold her, hold! She will rush to the fire! Don't let her go there!”

But the woman recoiled from Hindubek, rushed to the fire and turned to Babur:

– “You are not Shiva! You won't return him his life!” – She shouted stronger and furiously. – “You've lied... You're a cruel murderer, that's who you are! Go away, go away from us! Get away to your country!”- and suddenly she ran to the blazing stack, did a face plant to its top, reached embracing her husband's dead body.

The fire at once enveloped her silk clothes and hair. Babur heard a howl full of superhuman pain, he has seen this woman not parting her hands, felt the hard smell of a singed body, he felt sick, he sharply turned his horse, beat it by kamcha and skeltered away.

A pompously decorated double decked ship was waiting for Babur in quiet in the evening cool boat-yard. Downstairs cookers were fiddling with viands; upstairs servants were finishing last preparations for the feast.

A dismal and silent Babur went to the upper deck where the special dais under a shelter was furnished for him.

The beautiful widow with flowing hair and remote glance was still standing before Babur's eyes; he was still looking at her who was tousled, enveloped in flames. A heavy smell of shish kebab was flowing from below. But Babur was haunted by another smell which was sweetish and sickening. He ordered to stop immediately preparing of the viands.

– “My sovereign, but what about evening meeting?” – A manager preparing the feast was puzzled.

– “Cancel everything! Stop running about downstairs!”

And very soon everything calmed down on the ship.

But in silence Babur more clearly heard death shouts of the Indian widow: “For what did you come here, conqueror? Get away! Go back to your country!”

Oh, how happy he was because of victory won on Panipat field! Yes, there was a gaping gulf there, and he had jumped over successfully, bravely and almost without a blow, without bloodshed

he had conquered Delhi. He believed so much that now everything would be all right! But recollections about robberies and murders made by his nukers during the first march, involuntary calculation of victims, not those who went against him with arms, no, but children became orphans because of his victory, poor young widows (oh, Allah, indeed they also take their own lives by self-immolation?!) – this everything which withdrew into his soul's bottom, all this secret torment, hidden sore of soul now revived, began shouting in him, was reproaching and torturing his conscience. And what these considerations about "true faith" and even the idea of joining and improvement of the great country of great number of peoples and faiths signify in comparison with this searching of heart!

Swanky wind calms and justifies the conqueror, but his conscience, conscience... Babur remembered Mohim-begim's anxieties and sufferings before the march. She had a presentiment about present sufferings by her feminine sixth sense, by the motherly heart.

"My husband was killed by your wars. If you can return him his life and so I will remain alive!" The earth gaped under Babur's feet. It was the most terrible gulf... It was still ahead! And also that guide in Punjab who had managed to run away on the elephant, what was his name? Lal Kumar also shouted: "You're conqueror! A stranger! You've killed a thousand of our brothers!" and how may think people in a different way who had suffered from conquerors' invasions and had lost their relatives during the battles with them? These cities, these villages aren't yours, Babur. "Go back to your country!"... To which country should he go? Where? And whom he will manage to explain to that he had come here with good intentions? Will be he able to jump over the gulf of misunderstanding, if not today though tomorrow?

An old oppressive feeling of hopelessness, weakness, the feeling of the loser whose affairs always weren't successful, whose victories (even victories) always turned to damage woke up in his soul. Why fate didn't allow him to win in Maverennahr? The Panipat victory would be resounded for ages, he knew about it, he felt that it would be so, but today..., today he wouldn't be able to wash the black blot of the conqueror... today he understood why he hadn't been able to write joyful verses in honour of his victory the day before yesterday.

There were only stricken through lines in his copybook. He hadn't had true happiness also the day before yesterday, or to be more exact: there was bitterness in it which was getting loose.

It is bitterness, it is true!

Babur took up the pen. The first began ringing like a brook:

How many years, how many years I had no luck in everything.

It's a bad job!

He looked into the distance on the river. The water was flowing calmly. Red and crimson glares, the trackers of sunset's dying glow were playing, dazzling. There was blood on waves, everywhere!

Confessing before himself Babur wrote:

How many years, how many years I had no luck in everything.

It's a bad job!

My life is just delusion and now, and forever-

Turned out by black grief I had gone to Hindustan, but it dragged after me at once

Like a black shadow, like not washing off blot!

In twilight a four-paddled boat under fluffy canopy came nearer to the shah's ship. The guard shouted:

- "Who is there in the boat?"

Babur listened to the answer.

- "Mirza Khumayun asks the permission to see the great shah", - answered somebody by bass from the boat.

Babur wanted to have a heart-to-heart talk with his son in private. He called a servant and ordered:

- "Tell Khumayun to come quickly upstairs to me."

Soon light steps were heard. That's Khumayun! The eyes are shining with youthful ardour. The mustache hasn't thickened and clustered yet, but man power is winnowing from shoulders' turn and chest. The grieves of soul, weakness of the body don't exist for Khumayun yet. "I was the same at eighteen years old. What has remained from that horseman?" - After this thought Babur felt how the pain in the chest and head became stronger.

After mutual greetings Khumayun sat down opposite his father, weakened his robe's belt a little bit and smiling took out a small box trimmed with nacre hidden in the chest.

- "Please open and look at it, my sovereign."

Babur opened the box slowly. There was some jewel or better to say a shining star inside it on the velvet. Can it really be a diamond? It's as large as a nut and it is a diamond? Babur has seen a lot of different jewels in his lifetime, but he's never seen such a big diamond, he couldn't imagine that such diamond might exist.

– “What kind of jewel is it?”

– “It’s a diamond.”

The jewel was bathing in its own rays.

– “Which weight does it have?”

– “It has seven-eight mescals<sup>289</sup>.”

– “Such a big diamond!”

– “I’ve invited a connoisseur of diamonds, my sovereign, and had examine this jewel. It turned out that it’s famous Kohinoor. There is no larger diamond than this in the world. And it costs more than full trunks with gold.

– I heard that the ruler of Banola sultan Alaviddin has a splendid diamond which is far better and more expensive than other diamonds. People say as if its cost may cover the expenses of a large state for the whole month.

– “According to that connoisseur’s words the cost of Kohinoor may be compared with the expenses of all Dar-al-Islam states during two and a half days... He said so!” – Khumayun began to laugh merrily.

– “Where did you take it?”

Khumayun embarrassed answering:

– “I was given it by the family of Maharaja Gwalior.”

– “For what?”

Khumayun began his story shyly, but inspiring gradually.

– “My sovereign knows of course that Maharaja Bikramaditya whose clan rules Gwalior for a hundred years, very rich country, he hadn’t gone with Ibrahim Lody, was fighting for a long time against the sultan of Delhi, but for all that he had to give Gwalior city to Ibrahim and he himself had gone to Shamsabad where he died then.”

After the victory under Panipat Babur’s cavalry led by Khumayun, went out of Delhi and occupied Shamsabad where two daughters, the son and the widow of a dead rajah lived in the castle. The twenty-year-old son assured Khumayun: “Ibrahim Lody was not only yours but our enemy as well, we are also glad that he is overwhelmed. Now please allow us to return to our native land to Gwalior.” Khumayun treated this young maharaja with the participation, but he said to him he himself couldn’t give permission for returning of their family to Gwalior, it’s father’s affair, it’s necessary to wait for Shah Babur’s arrival to Shamsabad. And the castle of maharaja would be protected by the best fifty nukers under

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<sup>289</sup> measure of weight

the leadership of Vice-bek... And so at night he, Khumayun sleeping in the marquee in this castle's garden was awakened by a noise and shouts which were heard from the building. Khumayun runs to the castle with security and sees a nuker of vice bek lying dead in the pool of blood at the threshold leading to the internal chambers and eighteen-year-old daughter of rajah was trying to pick up a part of her sari's width from the floor to cover her naked shoulders. Also he sees five nukers surrounding her brother and knocking out a sabre from his hands.

The matter was that Vice-bek took fancy of one of the late maharaja's daughters and he made her to come to his room by force with the help of these nukers. The brother rose in defense of his sister. A nuker, who caught the girl in order to take her into the room, was knocked down by the sabre's stroke.

Khumayun ordered to free rajah at once.

– “A man protecting the honour of his sister deserves respect.” – Khumayun looked nukers-violators over. – “Did you hear: Shah Babur ordered to behave well with noble people in India? To put depraved Vice-bek into prison for neglecting of highest order. And ten strokes of lash to each nuker.” Then he met the maharaja's widow.

She was an educated woman. She knew several languages. She addressed to Khumayun in Farsi:

– “Amirzoda, there is our most expensive treasure here in this box. But my children are more expensive for me than all treasures of the world. – You've protected the honour of my daughter, saved my son's life. Let me give you this diamond as a sign of my gratitude...”

At the end of his story Khumayun looked at his father a little bit anxiously. “I'm right,-he thought,-but the death of our nuker isn't revenged and Vice-bek's punishment might be too severe. For all that he is our bek!”

– “Alas there is a blot, traces of blood and coercion even on this wonderful diamond!”

– “My sovereign, if I acted wrong, forgive me. But I thought that people for whom the honour and dignity are more expensive than a precious diamond, though they're unfaithful, not Muslims...but...”

– “Don't make excuses, my son! You acted generously. And there are generous with soul and selfless people in this country. We approached here not in vain. We need soldierly glory but also another one, not soldierly. But our greedy beks and rude nukers don't

understand my main aim. Just so they gorge, indulge with pretty girls, amuse their arrogance and profit of course. They frighten Indians with cruelty, greediness, savagery. But we want to create here mighty state, to organize it well and firmly. It's our main aim. When it realizes internal wars will stop, the peace will be established and then science and art will flourish. There are people among Indian rulers, even if they are not Muslims understanding this aim and because of it they cooperate with us. We must approach to receive trust and favour of the largest part of people living in India."

– "To gain them? Should we receive their trust?" – Khumayun asked again. – "But the conquered people don't like their conqueror. Though they give their lives and cooperate. But how can we receive the trust of those who look at us as at strangers who run from cities and villages to the jungle in order not to obey us?"

Babur again remembered how the young widow rushed to the fire cursing them, conquerors. – "It's a gulf, again gulf."

– "Yes, between us and...", – Babur assuaged the answer – "There is a gulf between us and those who had suffered from our nukers. We can't jump it over at a blow. I confess to you, my son, sometimes I can hardly believe that we'll overcome it. But the moment of despair goes away and I think also your story confirms that we can throw bridges patiently, gradually across this gulf. It's uneasy and difficult..." – Babur took the pearly box from the low table, - "But I hope that this aim is reachable. You managed to receive trust of Gwalior's maharaja's family. Do you remember you protected religious feelings of Indians from insult in Delhi in the temple? This diamond is the worthy award for your tolerance and mind. Take it..."

– "No, my sovereign." – Khumayun not touching the box put his hand on the chest. – "I've brought this diamond as a gift for you."

Babur again put the box on the table and said excited notably.

– "I thank God that He gave you such generous and kind heart! And also for the courage: at Panipat you first tilted the attack, thanks to you the spirit of the army raised and we won. I haven't rewarded you yet for all this."

– "Your previous gifts will be enough for me during all my life", – Khumayun said wishing to remember his father about the book "Mubayun". – "And I also wanted to give you worthy present long ago."

– "All right, I'll accept this gift from you. Is this diamond mine now?"

– “Yes, it’s yours.”

– “I may say the fortune has presented me with you. It’s a more valued gift than all diamonds of the world... You know how cruel and crafty crown-bearing fathers and sons dealt shortly with each other in a struggle for power and riches. I want such things never to happen between me and my children. You’re my inheritor. Let only noble thoughts and selfless soul will come down from father to son by God’s will. Then we’ll reach our goal for the sake of which we’ve come to India!”

– “Your son is ready to give everything for its realization and his life also.”

– “I believe in it. And you should believe that just you’re worthy of this diamond. Take it from me.”

Khumayun understood a special significance of this moment, jumped up, bowed, took the pearly box from his father’s hands and brought it to his eyes.

– “Sit down”, – Babur said to his son and clapped loudly. He said unexpectedly, energetically, clearly, youthfully to the servant who came to the call: – “Let Hindubek and Khoja Khalifa come. They must be already here on the ship.” – And he bent confidently toward his son: – “The mother of Sultan Ibrahim, his son and vizier Malikdod Karony and about a thousand of nukers with them locked themselves up in Agra’s citadel. They say as if they have sworn to fight in the last ditch.”

Khoja Khalifa and Hindubek came in with bows. Babur offered them a seat opposite him. And he began speaking in the same youthful clear manner:

– “You will be my messengers. You should go to Agra. Your aim is to take the stronghold without a blow. I promise life for everybody there. I give a district on the Jamuna’s bank to Sultan Ibrahim’s mother for ruling. They say that the son of Ibrahim is an educated boy who knows Arabic and Persian. He will be among my retainers in the castle. I heard Malikdod Karony is a capable vizier. I’ll take him into my service as adviser in the most difficult affairs in India. Speak with them convincingly about all these things. If they wish something else, tell them that we’ll make concessions. Explain to them that we have enough force to take the stronghold by storm. But we prefer peace and harmony to bloodshed, people’s destruction, increasing of

number of widows and orphans. In short, your goal is to conquer not the stronghold, but the favour and trust to us of those who are there."

## AGRA TO BE OR NOT TO BE

### I

Ibrahim Lody's mother, royal woman Bayda was dressed with white clothes from top to toe being in sorrow about her son, killed at Panipat. Or rather her sad mood and mourning didn't prevent her from battling cleverly and hard for her interests during negotiations with Hindubek and Khoja Khalifa. They have hardly managed to incline Bayda for Agra's surrender. When kingly straight and proud Bayda gave Babur the keys from stronghold's gates on Jamuna's bank, tears appeared in the eyes of the old woman, but her bearing didn't change.

Where, who had this bulging high forehead, these accrete eyebrows? And suddenly Babur remembered Panipat battle: among thousands of killed people Ibrahim Lody's body was found and according to the tradition his head was cut and brought to Babur on the lance. And as if Ibrahim Lody had been revived and he appeared before him as the winner in the likeness of his mother also won. Babur confused strangely feeling abstruse respectful shyness when he looked at this proud woman, asked the sultana whether she had some wish.

Bayda wiped quickly her tears and said faintly:

– "Don't cause me new sufferings!"

Babur addressed to his close men:

– "Let each of you revere this noble woman as our named mother!"

The close man took this shah's order into consideration with a bow. Also royal woman Bayda bowed to Babur expressing her gratitude. And nobody noticed her eyes wet with tears, flashed sharply with hatred for a moment and went out at once. The crown-bearing Bayda wasn't such a mother who might forgive her son's murderer. Ibrahim was the apple of her eye. When she knew about the terrible defeat at Panipat, about sultan's death, she felt as if the heaven fell upon the earth. To see again her son though dead, to bury him herself and to get it off her chest became her strongest wish. But it took three days to gallop from Agra to Panipat. That's why her proxy

people appeared on the stricken field a week later after the battle: a part of killed people was buried and the other part was gnawed by voracious neophrons gryphons.

People sent by Bayda didn't find Ibrahim's body. They just knew that after the battle had finished Ibrahim's head was separated from the body and was sent to Babur.

The suffering of mother who knew about outrage upon son's lifeless body increased tenfold. She had sufferings and the desire for revenge! "Oh, Ibrahimjon, there is no even your grave on the earth; they have taken away even your dead body from me! – So her soul was moaning while doing namaz<sup>290</sup>, any five daily namazes. During the prayer one doesn't ask God about anything, but Bayda asked: "Let Babur die too, he who had brought death to my son, let him die with death which will be in thousand times more painful than my son's death!"

Slaves, servants and confidantes of Bayda tried to bring her consoling gossips. As if Babur's army because of feed's lack had to give horses grain from the village stocks and villagers rebelled, killed many nuker-strangers by forks and axes. They said as if the conquerors were tormented by the Indian heat: people and horses used to the mountains' cool are unable to stand it and hundreds of them fell and died. They sent in gossips, plague, and fever to winners: allegedly their files are moved down as if by sickle, this way they passed the desirable for reality.

Bayda decided to check the truth of these gossips through her grandson Bahodir who served in Babur's palace. She thought that he wouldn't let go just to see his grandmother and she sent her servant with a letter to the palace where she informed that she was ill and would like to see her grandson on her decease bed.

Seventeen-year-old sultan Bahodir knew well Farsi and Sanskrit; he translated necessary documents to Babur. But of course the shah-winner had other translators; Bahodir wasn't overloaded with work, but he couldn't dispose himself of his time and occupations: he was guarded (you never know who might offend the son of a recent enemy), he was watched (the former inheritor of the former sultan always is good bait for plotters). Because of that and another reason they tried to let Bahodir out rarely beyond the palace walls.

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<sup>290</sup>a prayer

But the Vizier Muhammad Dulday read the letter of Bayda and remembering Babur's precept to revere her as "our named mother" allowed Bahodir to visit his grandmother. Though he doubled the number of nukers escorting Bahodir than usual and ordered very strictly to return that day.

Bayda, shamming herself ill, received her grandson in the dark bedroom allotted for her palace. She was lying in bed with a sorrowful expression on her face; her look was immovable and fixed on the ceiling. She rose on pillows with difficulty, seated Bahodir on eminence opposite her.

She was looking for a long time at her grandson's sweaty forehead. Then she said that the summer was hot, hotter than ever and kept silent later asked:

– "Is it true that strangers aren't able to stand our heat? They say they die, don't they?"

– "Sometimes they die." – Bahodir answered worn out by the heat.

– "And is it true many of them say: "we won't stay in India, we'll return to our cool lands?"

– "Will their shah allow it? The majority of strangers obey him. There is no denying he can persuade. He's eloquent. He summoned to the palace those who didn't hide their desire to go away, spoke to them and now all of them fell silent."

– "You shower praise upon your father's murderer?"

Bahodir glanced at the door with alertness. Bayda asked quietly:

– "Are you followed?"

– "Yes", - grandson whispered, – "I can't leave in private and speak. They surround, overhear... If I say something bad they will inform the shah immediately."

– "Don't be afraid. Here we are alone... Are there our people at the stranger's palace, those who served us before?"

– "Yes, there are... Honourable Malikdod Karony... Then the scholars are taken on the service those who were sitting in our library, do you remember? Shah Babur wants to gain our people, wants to gain the confidence of Hindus and Indian Muslims. Even one day he gathered all father's cooks and chose four for him..."

– "Really? And he eats himself the food prepared by these cooks?"

– “They say he eats. He even praises Indian dishes to show his respect...”

– “It’s very well that he eats!” – Bayda interrupted the grandson and rose from the bed unexpectedly with a lot of energy.

The grief still tormented her heart, but now the desire for revenge reared by grief stopped being aimless. She saw the clear aim, terrible, but clear and it gave her new strength.

If Babur is done away, his people won’t stay here, they will go home. “It’s necessary to gain the upper hand of one of the cooks, to make him the weapon of the revenge.”

Bayda whispered, brought her lips nearer to the grandson’s ear:

– “Have you seen those cooks yourself?”

– “Yes, I have.”

– “Is there Ahmed among them?”

Bahodir didn’t realize so far what had happened in thought of “sick” grandmother.

– “No, there isn’t. The cook Ahmed left Agra, why?”

And he looked again at the door. Bayda smiled. “This grandson is weak a little bit, and also too many eyes are watching him. He may give the secret away and he’ll destroy himself and I won’t accomplish my plans.” Bayda decided not to let Bahodir into this risky plan. She began moaning painfully-affectededly:

– “Oh, insidious world! People devoted to us in former times now serve our enemies! And Malikdod Karony and cooks, all, all had sold themselves! Oh, my soul bleeds, my old body hurts... But you, my grandson... serve them for appearance’s sake and are faithful to your father in your soul.”

– “I do so, grandmother!” – Bahodir whispered.

And when the grandson has gone away, the crown-bearing Bayda stopped hopeless moaning. She needed a loyal brave cook who would agree to kill Babur, to poison him for the money or because of feeling of revenge. There were a lot of people around who felt hatered towards conquerors. Babur’s nukers had killed a brother of one, a father of another one; Babur’s officials had taken away profitable office from a third one and a fourth one had been brought to ruin at all... Bayda soon found out that the favorite younger brother of one of the cooks taken by Babur had been killed at Panipat. But Bayda considered it risky to enter into talks herself with him as Babur’s people were watching her as well. The most devoted person to her

who served before at Sultan Ibrahim's palace with those cooks was Ahmed, just the one who had left Agra... Where? It turned that he went to Atov. The old sultana sent a person to that town with invitation for Ahmed to arrive to her.

And the cook Ahmed who had lost his house and fortune arrived. He arrived seething with hate towards strangers. Bayda set him up at her province, gave him a house, fixed the payment. She incited him gradually and carefully. At first Ahmed was frightened learning her intention; he said that he wouldn't be able to realize this affair. But Bayda cheered him up, assured in the safety of the role which he should play. It was incumbent on him to persuade the cook whose brother had been killed at Panipat "and we'll manage ourselves with other things". The cook Ahmed didn't know how to enter the shah's palace, but Bayda again found the right thing to do. She got out of the right to visit her grandson. And one day she came with a heavy pack of silk clothes, Ahmed was carrying this present. While the crown-bearing woman was at the reception at Babur, Ahmed found that cook. He turned to his bosom friend. The cooks appointed the meeting with each other the next day, already outside the palace. A week passed and Ahmed told Bayda that his friend the cook also hated strangers, the murderers of his brother. And he was ready to act.

## II

The heat grew on during three summer months and on the fourth called "ashora" in India reached the unthinkable spot. It was almost a month before rains.

Young vineyards were getting green in the Zerafshan garden which was situated on the left bank of the Jamuna. The garden was planted on the place of a recent wasteland with creepers. Boggy banks on the river were drained and leveled off and colorful flowerbeds-chorcharman which means "four flower gardens" was divided. Like it was in Herat and Samarqand...The construction of large hauz (pond) faced with marble and a complicated fountain was begun. Limpid aryk's water was purling in the garden. Red sand was crunching under feet pleasantly on the paths.

Babur went to Zerafshan garden with Khoja Kalonbek, Hindubek, Malikdod Karony and dozens of securities. There was such heat that Babur felt hot by the sun iron stirrups that burned feet

through boots' soles. And the shining pommel decorated with light gold plates was hot like coals just touching it.

Nevertheless Babur avoided talks about unbearable heat: many beks aimed at complaining about unsuitable climate in India every time they could, hadn't interest in the construction of new buildings in Agra and its environs, making of gardens. Of course they were glad that Babur took away though carefully, but serially lands from previous nobility, from relatives of Lody or people closely related to his family and gave them these lands, them who were alien winners. But other shah's innovations couldn't make them happy. Though Babur gave them lands for the service however he didn't avoid soyurgal<sup>291</sup>, new owners had to pay large taxes to the treasury. But the shah indulged merchants obviously: the more incomes a merchant had the less taxes he was obliged. Khumayun knew that his father has expressed this idea in the book "Mubayun". But beks didn't know about it and what would change if they knew. Their self-respect suffered, the thirst for enrichment was slaked in less sizes as they would it to be.

Oh, what a hard unbearable climate was in this foreign and alien India! And many beks including Khoja Kalonbek tried their best to find ways, reasons to praise native and cool cities of Kabul and Gazna, oh, Allah, let us return sooner...

Babur pointed at an old architect in little turban and long white yahtak<sup>292</sup>.

– "Do you recognize him?" – He asked Khoja Kalonbek.

– "Is he Fazliddin from Andijan?"

– "Yes, he is. I invited him from Kabul. He came with his son who is the builder and carver.. It was Mavlyana Fazliddin who had cultivated the garden where we're going now... Won't we, nukers, able to stand the heat which old man not used to soldiery privations can stand?"

– "But the sovereign, there are such people who can't adapt to such heat. When "bodi simoom" burning wind from desert began blowing yesterday, three of my nukers have fallen from horses on the ground and one after another and died."

– "If their days were numbered by God's will, then simoom was just an external push... Let God's will realize!" – Babur raised eyes on

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<sup>291</sup> the position of feudal

<sup>292</sup> men's shirt

the heaven praying and dropped them down at once. Fazliddin went to meet and bowed. Babur addressed to him: "Don't get tired, mavlyana... So tell about your requests. I arrived to listen to them."

– "I have such request, sovereign: we need elephants and people able to treat them. It's necessary to bring very heavy stones from Delhapur; only elephants can load them on big bullock carts."

Babur turned towards Malikdod Karony, Indian counselor:

– "Is it possible to give fighting elephants a taste for peaceful labour?"

– "Yes, it is my lord. An elephant is a very clever animal. In India elephants are trained to soldierly affairs and to labour. It's possible to drive elephants and drovers from far villages..."

– "No, we'll do another way. We're not trained to use elephants during fights. But there are a lot of elephants among our military loot taken in Panipat and other battles. It should to retrain and adapt them to the work on constructions. Dear Karony, today bring to notice those who can treat elephants."

– "I'll carry out at once, my lord!"

And Karony wanted to go back immediately, but Babur stopped him.

– "And one more thing... Send heralds to cities and villages to inform everybody: we are going to spend treasures taken from Sultan Ibrahim for construction and improvement. Let them announce it everywhere and in everybody's hearing! Mavlyana, do you have enough work of builders?"

– "For the present I have enough. But I have some difficulties. You've ordered to finish the construction of a marble palace and build big stone hauz<sup>293</sup> given the due date. The most laborious long thing is a trimming of stones and carving."

– "If we add masters of this work?"

– "And I wanted to ask you about it, sovereign. Stones and marble are more suitable for India than bricks and colorful tiles which are used in Herat and Samarcand."

– "Mavlyana, how many carvers work on all our constructions?"

– "Only in Agra there are eighty people. And the whole number is one thousand four hundred ninety including Sekhri, Delhapur and other places."

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<sup>293</sup> a pond

– “It’ quite a lot.” – Babur smiled contentedly. – “When Amir Timur constructed the biggest buildings in Samarqand just two hundred masters from different countries worked at him. The famous historic Mullah Sharafiddin Ali Yazdi considers this figure as very large. But India is so large and rich of masters that we’ll invite them, not to bring like slavers, but to invite not a hundred but thousands of stonemasons and carves. Dear Karony, send heralds to all cities depending on us. Let everybody know that builders who have desire to work at us will receive the highest salary that existed before somewhere in India. The salary and status will be the same for both Muslim master and Hindu master in the name of the affair pleasing to God, in the name of praising the true faith. We will take all masters who will make us glad under our protection! For the prophet entrusted: all God’s slavers are equal before the one God!”

Karony went to Agra. And other beks glanced with desire at the ship ever and anon which was swinging on Jamuna’s waves held by anchors not far from here. Babur had to go to the ship as it was cooler on the water after a survey of constructing buildings and the garden. But alas, the shah wasn’t probably in a hurry. He began asking the architect about what domes and internal decoration of the bathhouse would look like, what was decided to build between the palace and the river.

– “There will be revetment from thin and colored marble plates inside like in Samarqand bathhouse of great Ulugbek, well-known for all Mavarannakhr.” – Fazliddin told slowly.

– “But the dome will be bigger than that famous bathhouse. We’ll construct walls from strong red stone... The marble has amazing feature, as you know, sovereign: it lets through heat a little inside and lets through a little outside, that’s why these marble plates will come in handy in summer when the cool is so necessary.”

– “Oh, mavlyana, finish quickly this marble bathhouse or we’ll soon turn into ash on this scorching heat!” – Kalonbek murrey from heat has interrupted them.

– “If you want that we construct these buildings from marble quicker, dear bek, dismount from your horse and help us.” – Fazliddin joked.

Babur content with the answer asked the architect:

– “Don’t you suffer from the heat, mavlyana?”

– “Yes, I do, but I endure... I dreamt to construct wonderful buildings in Andijan, but I didn’t manage to do it. I hoped to construct in Samarqand, Herat... The pictures of these buildings were getting dusty and turning yellow in my papers for thirty years. And it turns it’s fated that the dreams of my life will realize in Agra far from my motherland. If it’s God’s will so I’ll be able to stand this heat. By the words, why Indians stand it? In summer they don’t eat meat, drink more juice slaking thirst, and have many fruits. I also got used to light food. I wake up very early, work in morning coolness about four hours. And when the heat begins I lie in the shadow, rest also four hours. When the heat recedes I work again four hours.”

– “Quite so! And we eat meat from morning to night, now kazi<sup>294</sup>, now kebabs, now shish kebab.” – Babur looked at Kalonbek. – “And we take wine and burning alcohol after all this, it turns the heat isn’t enough for us.”

Khoja Kalonbek was hardly sitting in the saddle; the sweat was flowing in streams on his face, on his mustache, was dripping on the chest. And it seemed also to Babur that with each breath not air but a crest of flame enters the chest. It was necessary to go, immediately! And thanked Fazliddin for the pleasant talk he turned the horse towards the river and started at a gallop where anchored ship like mirage was swinging.

A contrary wind freshened up the face. And it became easier to breathe.

When the river was already near, the black Badahshan horse on which Khoja Kalonbek’s nuker (a bodyguard of feudal aristocracy) galloped, has stumbled, began tossing its head and suddenly collapsed on the earth. The nuker had time to jump off his horse, began pulling by bridle, then by reins, he tried to raise the studhorse, foam with blood went from its mouth, he began to spin lying on the beam ends in convulsions. The nuker has jumped aside fearing to be hurt by hoof stroke.

– “Eh, the horse also caught sunstroke!” – Kalonbek said in a sad voice. – “But it’s difficult to find such horses!”

– “Dear bek, it’s not worth for man to despond! I’ll order to give your nuker a racer from my stable.”

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<sup>294</sup> a horse sausage

– “Thank you very much, my sovereign!” – Khoja Kalonbek smiled gloomily – “But the case is not in the horse! I can see my future through this case.”

Babur dismounted from the horse (they arrived on the bank). Pointing with hand at the ship called “Osoyish” he said:

– “For the present time it’s your near future, my dear beks! Let’s enjoy calm rest.”

They came up to the ship on boats, went aboard. Babur with Khoja Kalonbek went to the bow under the tent to stay in private. The ship flew quickly and smoothly along the river, and head wind made man’s life not only bearable, but also pleasant.

A servant brought cool orange and lemon sherbet. Khoja Kalonbek tilted out the whole kasa<sup>295</sup> of orange juice. “No, no, it’s possible to live in India with pleasant things” - he thought and looked already sensibly at Babur.

– “My sovereign, you’ve lost much weight, got dark and became thin in face here in Agra. Though you hide from us how it’s difficult for you and maybe other beks don’t guess about it, but I guess, know everything and feel it.”

– “Yes, bek, we’re almost 30 years together. We’ve gone through many things together, haven’t we? If to compare this heat with experienced troubles, our present discomfort doesn’t mean anything. Isn’t it trifle?”

Khoja Kalonbek took a silk handkerchief out of bosom and wiped abundant sweat which covered eyes:

– “Alas, my lord, probably I lived years intended for me! When I was a horseman I didn’t know the difference between the heat and the cold. But now, when I’m over fifty... I feel I put on a year during a week in India. Kasimbek Kavchin from old devoted to you beks was elder me; recently he went to the next world, let God receive his soul. If everything goes such way, next will be my turn, the sovereign. I won’t last out much, hey, hey, I won’t...”

– “Don’t say so, my Kalonbek. Everything in God’s will, it’s true, but I have a presentiment: you will live for a long time!”

– “My mind doesn’t believe that man come from cool lands, from Mavarannahr may arrive even at the age of 60 under this incinerating sun.”

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<sup>295</sup> a cup

– “Why? Khosrov Dehlavy arrived at the age of 72 in India though he was from Shahrisabs. What will you say on it?”

Khosrov Delhivy was the favorite poet of Khoja Kalonbek. When the army was going through Delhi, Babur and Kalonbek found time to visit Nizammidin Avlay's tomb where Khosrov Dehlavy was also buried. They were standing humbly a little bit at his grave. Kalonbek remembered Dehlavy's famous verse: “The gifted man hurries to Hindustan – no, there was a reason for it!” – He remembered and became proud at himself at that moment; it was funny, but touchy. But the heat wasn't so harassing then like it was now.

Babur uttered the name of Dehlavy for reason, maybe that verse would come again to the bek's mind and that mood which it expressed.

Kalonbek remembered everything, understood everything and gave a cough with embarrassment. He didn't say the verse. He said another thing, in a low voice.

– “Oh, the sovereign, Dehlavy was a great man. I wouldn't dare to compete with him...”

– “The purpose of our life isn't in daring to compete with the great people, - do you remember, you wanted to be a continuer of their work. This might and should...”

– “The sovereign, you've started the great work only in Afghanistan. May I become the continuer there! Please, let me go to Gazny.”

– “Again Gazny! You forgot what difficult life we had in Gazny. We wanted to restore destroyed dam of Makhmud Gaznevy and we didn't manage to do it! When we found people we hadn't enough money. When we found money, we hadn't something else. But here we have everything! Kalonbek, India is ocean of forces and means!”

– “But the ocean may absorb me, small person from strange land. Neither track nor name will leave from me here.”

Khoja Kalonbek told about himself, but Babur understood that he meant all people who came to India with Babur, and he also meant the Padishah. And other beks whispered often: “We won't be enough even for kindling in this boundless country. We'll disappear as a drop in the ocean among countless Hindus, we'd better return home taking with us so many treasures as we'll be able to take with us.”

– “Is your purpose of life to place yourself on record?”, – Babur asked. – “Today we all have seen new garden Zerafshan. We will be

alive, we will see how gardens will make a noise, palaces will raise here more beautiful than in Samarqand and Herat. There is decline, darkness there, my bek. But it's necessary to continue here things made in Samarqand and Herat, to join with great trunk of Indian tree! Won't it remain in memory of future generations, won't praise our mark and name?"

– "Amir Timur did another way. And Makhmud Gaznevy also did. He had conquered India, had taken necessary means, all necessary people from here to his country."

– "And where is his state now? Should I follow Makhmud's example?"

– "Oh, the sovereign. You're really another person, the example of Biruni and Dehlavy fascinates you more. But, my hazrat, don't we conquer India with sword?"

Babur kept silent. He was looking with concentration at the river where the wind blew. He began speaking slowly:

– "My bek, we aren't robbers. And we don't have enough convoy to take out all treasures of this country, all its masters! On the contrary I invite here skillful builders and scholars from Khorasan, Mavarannahr, even from Iran; today you've seen mavlyana Fazliddin from Andijan. The famous engineer Suleiman Rummy, who is able to build fountains, will arrive soon from Tabriz. I invited historian Khondamir from Herat... No, beks, we aren't strangers here. We'll stop to be strangers. We should give the whole mind, all abilities to this country. Only then we will be able to bridge a gulf..."

Kalonbek understood not quite about what gulf the shah said, but he didn't disagree. He knew that Babur always gained the upper hand in such arguments by the power of his logic and eloquence. Khoja Kalonbek pretended to be defeated in the war of words and passed to usual flattery always pleasant for sovereigns as he thought.

– "My lord, you have iron will and mighty spirit. Another one at your place didn't torment a ten part of trials which fell to your lot. But you've stood everything and also you want to accomplish such things which are within I don't know whose depth it is: Iskander's or Jamshid's? Is it Rustam's? My years passed near you and they confirm me in your greatness more and more. And I fancy a small hill at the foot of a huge mountain. Everybody ought to do his own thing. Things which were given you weren't given me."

The voice of Kalonbek quavered almost unfeignedly. The bek stopped talking. Babur read slowly Dehlavy's verse:

– "Everybody costs other things; we all are Adam's descendants".

– "But five fingers aren't equal between each other. And if I try to pick up burden which you're carrying, I'll overstrain myself. The sovereign, my lord, would you like me to live 5 more years. Let me go. I'll go to Gazny and restore that old dam. I'll make the desert habitable praising your name."

Babur began thinking. Kalonbek felt that he found some string of soul with the help of which he would manage to strive for his goal from his shah.

– "The sovereign, my lord, hark to my request! Flourishing the whole end of my life I'll remember you in my prayers. I want to be buried in Gazny: nearer to my motherland."

Babur noticed how wet became Kalonbek's eyes. At last he asked:

– "If other beks follow you who will stay with me?"

– "I'll speak to the beks. I vow I'll tell them: "The sovereign sends me to restore the dam in Gazny." I'll leave the way nobody will follow me, believe me!"

Babur didn't know yet that Khoja Kalonbek during some drinking bout laid his shirt with beks that he would ask the shah for permission to leave and would go to Gazny. Now he moved heaven and earth, even abased himself to with an argument, but it was painful for him that Babur didn't deny his self-derogations, didn't confirm that he, Khoja Kalonbek was an influential and valiant emir.

– "All right, have it your own way." – Babur agreed.

– "But at first go to Kabul. Pass letters and presents to Mohim-begim... I've given money for travelling expenses to those scholars and masters who come here from Herat, Samarcand, Tabriz and other cities because of our call. You also will bring a part of money to Kabul; you should pay the fare of necessary people... We won't spare money; my bek", - added Babur and saw the shadow of displeasure on Kalonbek's face. – "Now we have them much. We're able to pay any labour at the highest price. And invite on behalf of us everybody who suffered from ignorance of Sheybany's offsprings, of Kizilbashes<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> shah's soldiers

self-will, everybody who look for the use of their abilities. Let them come here. We'll find work for everybody."

– "I'll carry out your orders from the heart, the sovereign. I'll do this way: I go away alone, but tens and hundreds of necessary people will come here."

It seemed to Babur that Kalonbek was speaking to him sincerely. But as soon as he went to Gazny verses in Farsi were found on the wall of the mansion where the sly bek had lived in Agra and these verses have thrown daylight upon true feeling of Babur's company:

*If I am safe and sound, I'll cut my way through Sind, I vow.*

*Let me be damned but I won't return in Hind, I vow!*

These verses written on the wall with banner letters were spreading quickly among those who surrounded the shah and wanted to follow Kalonbek. One day Babur was informed by Hindubek about the bet between Kalonbek, recent company and his feast friends.

– "Sly and scoundrel!" – Babur shouted angrily. – "He won the bet and took me over. But we'll see who will win at the end." - The shah was pacing from corner to corner.

What to do with Kalonbek? Maybe to send a herald immediately with the order to relieve Khoja Kalonbek as the ruler of Gazny, let him really be occupied with the restoration of the dam without advantages which the post of the ruler gives? But in this case Babur would lose any support of old, though sly, knowing the time of day bek, to whom he's entrusted indeed very important missions. But what should he do? Should he keep silent? Neither proud nor rational account didn't allow it, because these simple verses of Kalonbek may pick up stronger beks and nukers, dreaming of departure from India. And if he punishes Khoja Kalonbek some way the reputation of *beyt*<sup>297</sup> will raise.

– "Are these verses standing conspicuously on the wall till now?"

– Babur asked Hindubek.

– "No, they aren't. I erased them."

– "You shouldn't have done that. A thing erased by force, grips harder in people's memory." – It suddenly dawned upon Babur: "Hey, servant, call a scribe! And be snappy about it!"

A young scribe came in with paper, pen and inkpot and stood before the shah not straightening himself up after a bow.

– "Write! And sit comfortably!"

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<sup>297</sup> a distich

The scribe squatted down, put a plank on knees, smoothed out paper, and sharpened a pen.

“Babur, thank the fate, it was generous:

It had given you both Sind and boundless Hind.”

No, it's necessary to express clearly that India isn't a strange land for us, but it's a new second motherland.

And Babur has dictated quickly and firmly:

“Babur, thank fate, it was generous:

It had given you new home, great Hind.

Let heat and sun's enemy go to Gazny

There the fate had taken away cold weaklings.”

Hindubek was excited. Indeed Khoja Kalonbek liked to assume an air of cold, arrogant look; he didn't have modesty thinking that he saw farther than others.

– “Copy it out on three rolls.” – Babur said. – “Send one of them to Khoja Kalonbek. You, Hindubek take the second one; give it to read to the beks and nukers who repeat Kalonbek's beyt. We'll see who wins in this muoshoiria.”

Babur felt that his shot turned out neat, when once he heard how the beks advised to another who began complaining of the heat, to “go to Gazny” – “there the fate had taken away cold weaklings”...

### III

Takhir was lying in bed about three months after the battle in Panipat. The doctor, sent to him from the palace, could hardly overcome cut wounds with his skills, but he couldn't do anything with fractures of ribs and splintered bones of hands. The pain didn't release Takhir the whole day and night. The strong nuker Takhir did his best in order not to deafen the small yard in Agra with moans, where he lived with devoted Mamat. “Maybe I'll be brought to the cemetery from this hut”. – Takhir often thought.

At that time Mavlyana Fazliddin brought Takhir's son Safar who had finished madrasah and became an engineer. He made inquiries to Indian masters working at the construction and they had found the famous doctor and brought him to Takhir. Mavlyana Fazliddin heard that this doctor treated fractures skillfully, treated poor people kindly. It meant he had a good mind and heart.

"Sahib<sup>298</sup> Bayju", - the architect said to the doctor, - " My nephew Takhir wasn't born as bek, he's from hard-working peasants, he gave all zeal to the land-provider. I was against his becoming a nuker. I told you about it in Osh, Takhirjan, didn't I?"

- "Oh, I should have obeyed you, uncle mullah", - Takhir sighed.  
- "I've become the bek; I had too high opinion of myself..."

Mavlyana Fazliddin alternating with Persian words and Urdu set forth the main thing at last:

- "My nephew wants to go out of circle of cruel beks and nukers who think only about wars and robbery. He wants to be occupied with peaceful labour. Like Mamat who works at the construction of gardens. Like you, dear tabib<sup>299</sup>... Please, help my nephew!"

- "I know you've come here not with the military purpose, mavlyana sahib." -Bayju answered Fazliddin. - "Because of respect to you, the architect, I'll help your nephew."

Bayju treated Takhir for a month. He acted skillfully and patiently with his hands, bandaging, and some liquids identified places of fractures with his sensitive fingers. Takhir didn't lose a spot of blood during the treatment. He got used to jet-white palms and thin swarthy fingers of the doctor as they belong to him.

Bayju refused to take a payment. He said to recovered Takhir:

- "You've brought my hands of tabib to your eyes. It's the sign of your gratitude."

- "No, no, I'm indebted to you till my dying day!" - Takhir exclaimed.

- "Who knows, maybe now I've squared one my debt?"

And after long blandishments, after Fazliddin and Takhir have promised not to retell what they would hear from him, Bayju told about his brother the drover of elephants. Under Ibrahim Lody the brother didn't find job in Agra and went to Punjab. He found out that the shah Babur had killed many of our people and then he vowed: "I won't let these strangers pass our native land!" He's applied for work of the guide to enemy's army and led them to marshes, to impassable jungles.

- "Wait!" - Takhir remembered Lal Kumar. - "His elephants injured two of our nukers then. The guide ran away. But I confess you he enraptured me by his courage. He wasn't afraid of the whole army!

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<sup>298</sup> sir

<sup>299</sup> a doctor

We thought that he also hadn't managed to get out of marches and thickets. So, he managed, didn't he? Is he alive?"

- "Yes, he is, but he's afraid to come to Agra... It isn't well that my brother had maimed your nukers, but maybe the fact I've cured sahib Takhir extenuates partly our previous sin before you?"

Fazliddin and Takhir began protesting:

- "Sahib Bayju! To protect the motherland so bravely isn't sin, but it's valour!"

- "Thank you, my friends, for such words! But valour doesn't give livelihood. The brother is obliged to hide himself in his own country. He hasn't job and there is nothing to feed children."

- "Has your brother worked at constructions?"

- "Yes, he's trained his elephant to carry stones and logs."

- "Then let him come to me. Now we retrain even fighting elephants!"

- "My brother heard about it. He is glad like all of us that your shah spends money, treasures on improvement of cities, that money which Ibrahim Lody hid. But I'm still afraid that the brother may fall into authorities' hands... Sahib - the doctor addressed to Mavlyana Fazliddin, -our people heard that your shah respects you, that you manage all major constructions both here in Agra and in Delhapur, and in Sikry. Maybe you will ask for forgiveness of my brother?"

Fazliddin shook his head.

- "Though Mirza Babur is the great poet and well-educated person, but don't you know the proverb: "It's always dangerous to come up close to a lion and Padishah"? It would be better if your brother changes his name and appearance."

- "He's already done it. Now his name is Krishan. He grew a beard the length of his chest."

- "Very well. So bring him to me in a week, but not here, to Delhapur. There we'll make so nobody knows about his past."

## IV

In the month Saraton when winds follow rains, Takhir came to Babur's palace.

The shah could hardly recognize his devoted bek: his beard and moustache turned grey much, shoulders lost masculine tension as if they've become hollow inside, have grown flabby. New scars like patches added to the old one along his cheek on the chin and neck.

– “God be thanked, you’ve recovered, bek”, – Babur addressed to Takhir cheerfully on purpose. – “It’s good that your uncle has come from Kabul.”

– “Yes, probably God has sent him to me. He saved me.”

– “And when will you return to the service, bek?”

The right hand of Takhir didn’t bend, the neck obeyed badly: if it was necessary to look to the left or to the right, he had to turn his whole body.

– “Alas, I’m already not the man to be bodyguard, my lord.”

– “I don’t speak about it. I’d like to see you among the close ones, among nearest beks to me.”

– “No, I won’t be able to become the bek... And now I even don’t want to be him.”

– “Why?”

And Takhir told in details (Babur listened attentively) not hiding anything how before the beginning of the battle in Panipat being tipsy and swanky he had beaten up the novker Mamat brutally (his friend, the sovereign!) and everything which had happened after it.

– “I was lying in bed dying of wounds, but pang of conscience pressed me more, the sovereign. It won’t do for me to be the bek. I’m also a ploughman. And also I’m a nuker. But I’m already crippled. Let me work in the garden which my uncle mullah is constructing now. I’ll hose, grow flowers. I am used not only to ploughing, but to gardening and hunting in Kuva.”

Babur listened with his eyes raised to rainy clouds; they were flowing in the sky between marble painted columns of the terrace. Beautiful... It’s beautiful with disappearing beauty. He made Takhir bek with good intentions, but now he saw that he didn’t bring him happiness.

– “All right, let it be your way: my combat bek, my friend won’t be bek any more, but become a gardener. He’ll get rid of beks, and I...how shall I get rid of?”

Takhir was bewildered, but not so much for evading the question:

– “You are a shah. A ploughman and a shah is not the same. Beks are subordinate to you...”

– “They are subordinate, but they override too. And if become heedless for a while, they, following self-interest, can lead to such an

abyss, which you will never manage to escape. They'll ruin... Do you remember what I had told in Isfara?"

- "Master, I will not forget those words of yours until my death."

- "And what did you tell? What did you promise? "I'll forever be by you", - do you remember?"

- "Master, at that time I was a strong fellow... Why do you need me being infirm?"

- "I need a man, who would watch my "shelter of solitude" from his heart."

Babur gave this name to a room where he stayed alone and wrote. Takhir knew that Babur spent his most dear and pleasant hours in his life there. But Takhir imagined intrigues, gossips, palace servants leering at him: nobody likes master's favorites! - And decided to achieve permission to work in the garden, close to his uncle.

- "My lord, forgive your slave. My heart is inclining to work in the garden..."

- "Well, we'll make another "shelter of solitude" in the garden", - Babur said. - "And you'll watch it too after construction is over. Agree?"

There's no way to refuse now! Besides, Takhir didn't contradict Babur. As a sign of obedience and consent he placed his right hand, which he move could hardly, to the left half of his chest - to his heart.

For two months it had been raining heavily in Agra. The heat went down, but all-permeating moisture tore out. The paper on which Babur wrote dampened. Clothes couldn't get dry for days. The air was like the one in bath, moist sultriness took the breath away.

Babur stayed in Agra and every evening went to his "shelter of solitude", which was located deep in the large garden. It was a small house with four rooms. They were being cleaned by two servants. Takhir became "oftobachi" (responsible for wash-stand), but wasn't as much responsible for water and wine, as for books, manuscripts, clean paper, pens and ink. There was an octagon table in the quiete and comfortable room, Babur liked to write there. In the next room they placed dastarkhan with pink infusion with lemon and pineapple juices, plates with petals of tanbul and nutlets of fufal<sup>300</sup>, which contained invigorating seeds of red color.

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<sup>300</sup> Tanbul and fufal are the Indian plants and fruit, which were very fragrant and were used for refreshing of drinking water and juices

One day Takhir placed a jug of aromatic gazniy wine on dastarkhan. But in the evening of the same day Babur warned:

– “Take it away! It’s enough of the wine drunk during feasts.”

After that Takhir never brought wine to the “shelter of solitude”.

If Babur worked in the inner room all night long, Takhir didn’t sleep until the dawn too.

Babur knew that his former bek was awake in the entrance-room; he sometimes came to him and asked questions.

Once he asked:

– “Takhirbek, do you remember that in archa forests of Badahshan we saw one grass with a very tender smell? What was its name? It grows in abundance both in Dehkata and in the mountains of Osmon Yayılu... It’s light blue. I wrote its name in a notebook. It looks like I have left the notebook in Kabul, I can’t find it here.”

– “Do horses eat it, this grass?”

– “Yes, gladly. It’s low, and grows in tufts.”

– “Isn’t it betaka?”

– “Right, betaka, well done! Betaka, betaka. Butaka is the correct pronunciation! So, it grows in tufts, like a branch from a twig. “Butok” stands for twig, branch, and “butaka” – that’s how they call this grass in Badahshan.”

Babur sometimes asked Takhir about details of events, experienced together, or the places which they had visited. Takhir knew that Babur was writing a book about his life. And he felt himself an involuntary maker of it, and was glad that the days, spent by his master’s “shelter of solitude”, were not spent uselessly.

Once at midnight Babur came out and read in a sad voice:

*How long shall I be far from motherland?*

*I'm much in pain, and have no peace in real*

*I willingly arrived into this land,*

*I can't turn back on it of my own will.*

These lines irritated Takhir so much that he almost began groaning.

They kept silent. Everyone thought about his own thing. About their wives: Babur thought about Mohim-begim most of all, Takhir - about Robiya.

– “When shall we see them, my lord? Nine months have already passed since we have been alone here, in Agra.”

– “Roads are still dangerous. They are dangerous especially for women. Besides, there’s no time for family delight, Takhirkbek. Rano Sangram Singh is going to start a war against us...”

– “But he made an agreement against Ibrahim with us, when we were in Kabul.”

– “This rajput wanted to take Delhi and Agra with our help. He is brave; I must say it. But he is sly too; - he thought that after war against Ibrahim we’ll leave. And now he sees that we are staying here and plan new construction works. That’s why he began to gather forces against us. He conquered many districts from his Chitur. He calls us “Mogols”, though knows that we are Turks. Rano Sangram gathers those dissatisfied with us around him.”

– “Yes, my lord, there are many dissatisfied people here too. There are reasons to be dissatisfied.”

By saying this Takhir wanted to remind Babur about what had happened there, in Agra fortress, recently.

Behind the palace there was a large neglected ground up to the fortress wall. Babur ordered to build a pool in the center of it – Hindu people call it a covered pool with cascades dashing down. The pool had to be dug very deep, three levels down the surface of the ground, with wells of three levels, - tebrizian Suleyman Rumi, who had arrived in Agra, planned it to be this way. Stepped stairs were to lead from its bottom. Simply speaking, there was much work, and Babur ordered to finish it in half a year. Here rainy season started. Hindu specialists said that it was prohibited to dig ground. They didn’t follow his words and made to continue work. And three days ago one side fell; four diggers on the very bottom were crushed. When they were dug out, they were dead already. The fourth one with broken spine was to be a cripple the rest of his life. The Hindu demanded punishment for sarkor – the chief who made them work, the one who was guilty of the accident. But the Vizier Muhammad-agha Dulday banished them, and accused them of not following precautions. After that the three Hindu specialists ran away from Babur’s palace, - most likely they joined Rano Sangram.

Takhir saw the dead bodies under the crash. The color of their hands reminded Takhir of the doctor Baydfa’s hands.

Takhir turned to Babur with all his body, and asked:

– “Master, do you know how the crash of the pool occurred?”

– “Yes, Muhammad Dulday told me about it.”

– “Everyone says that it happened because of sarkor.”

– “The diggers should have been more careful. I gave an order to strengthen the shafts’ walls with wooden shields and props. It won’t be dangerous to work then.”

– “And they say that the Hindu ran away.”

– “I appointed a new sarkor, and hired other specialists. Is there a lack of builders in Agra?”

So, the work will continue. And another crash was possible. And new victims.

Recently Babur’s verses aroused in Takhir’s heart, besides everything, a feeling of love to the man who had written them. But now – it all fell off, and a cold wind of alienation began to blow. How can passionate feeling of missing relatives, motherland and ignorance of others’ grief live together in the heart of one man? And he, Takhir, had loved this man a long time before and now! Heat and cold... good and evil...strength and beauty – how it can be understood this web, their circulation.

Takhir felt pain.

## V

Cook Bahlul – he cooked food in the palace kitchen for the shah’s table – he saw the diggers buried in the crash too, and the longing of revenge for his twenty year old brother, who had died of enemy’s saber in the battle by Panipata, for the dead diggers, for insulting sultaness Bayda, became stronger – for everything that conquerors had brought with them.

Ahmed delivered poison to the cook Bahlul through his messenger – slave of Bayda. Another slave, who managed to visit Babur’s palace too, delivered the order of the sultaness to hurry up: after the rainy season Babur would go to a campaign against Rano Sangram.

There was little poison, only two pinches, in white folded paper – the menacing weapon lied there like a rare spice, using which Bahlul wanted not only to take revenge for his brother’s death, but to banish the stranger conquerors from his country. Ahmed persuaded Bahlul: if they killed Babur, other conquerors would leave India too, and the throne would be taken by Ibrahim’s son, Lodi.

Babur had his own bakavulas, who had to thoroughly check the food which was served to shah’s table. That evening it was raining

heavily, and under its noise bakavulas drank much alcohol and got drunk. Ready Kayla was gurgling in the kettle already; it was dressed with sour-sweet sauce made of fruits of Hindu plant karunda. Bahlul knew that Babur liked that Hindu dish. He pulled the paper out of his bosom imperceptibly, looked around – there was nobody in the kitchen, - came to the door to the next room, where the drunken bakavulas were bawling songs.

It's the right time to do it!

Bahlul poured the poison powder not into the kettle – bakavula usually brought food from the kettle as a snack for vodka, - but on thin bread, which he had placed on a large china dish. Suddenly a strong wind slammed the outer door sharply, and Bahlul scared and being in a great haste threw the rest of the powder into the fire under the kettle. He looked around again and he calmed down. With confident movements he put Kayla on top of the bread, and poured drawn oil on it.

Soon a servant came into the kitchen, took the china dish and carried if off to the hall where Babur ate his supper. He also took a plate with fried carrots cut into thin pieces.

Ahmed assured him that the poison couldn't be determined by its taste, and that it worked slowly, and gradually. So Bahlul hoped that he would manage to hide before turmoil rose in the palace. But the unforeseen thing happened: in the doors to the dining-room one of the drunken cook-tasters blocked his way.

– “Well, did you leave the hare meat for us?” – He asked shaking.

– “There’s meat noodle soup, sahib.”

– “No, we want hare meat!”

– “But there was little of fried hare meat, all the kayla has been taken to the great shah...”

– “No, I say: there was a lot of it! Why didn’t you leave for us?

Huh?” – The drunken robust bakavul yelled.

– “I haven’t fried all of it...”

– “So, fry hare meat for us! Now!”

Bahlul returned to the fireplace, began to bustle about the kettle with perturbation: melted oil again, cut hare meat into small pieces.

Night fell on the palace, it was dark and windy. It was still pouring.

And suddenly novker-guards began to run about, somebody yelled loudly: “Doctor! Doctor!” Bakavulas began to bustle, pushing

each other. The noise grew, and a crowd gathered by the doors of the dining-room. Takhir ran headlong from the far "shelter of solitude", and ran into the dining room.

Babur was throwing up. His face turned blue. He was choking; he rushed to the doors to go outside, but having not made even two steps, he shook. Takhir ran to him and supported.

Doctor Yusufi appeared.

– "Spread quilts on the terrace!" – He ordered to the servants.

– "No... In the yard!" – Babur croaked, another vomit assault made him bend.

– "Master, it's raining outside! It's better on terrace!"

Babur, supported by hands, was taken to verandah, and laid on quilt. The doctor made him snuff the medicine, "strengthening heart" when "a man had drunk too much wine".

– "I didn't drink wine... It's the food!" – Babur said, stood up and bent over a china basin again, having managed to yell: – "The cook! Catch him!"

Though less than Babur, two of his commensals, who had tried the kayla, were throwing up too.

Bahlula was caught not by Novkers, but the cook-food tasters. The executioners made him confess to everything quickly. Novkers were immediately sent to catch Ahmed, Bayda, her slave and servants.

For the whole night Babur was in such condition, that at each vomit onset, at each chill everyone expected a fatal outcome. And only Yusufi, the doctor, did gastric lavage to him, gave him different medicine and assured all the time: «It'll be all right! We'll cure you, master».

The world seemed to be torn into uneasy parts. And together with it – the heart, and the lungs, and the gastric were striving outside. Some multicolored stains were in the eyes. And through them he saw Humayun, Bayda, and meek Mohim-begim.

Babur groaned. He whispered (though it seemed to him that he spoke loudly): «Why have I sent Khumayun to Kabul? And from there he would go to Badahshan...because...there's distemper again on the north...after the rains finish – that's when it's better to leave». He was losing consciousness – and Amir Timur in black-red chalma with Hindu diamond appeared in front of him. He recovered consciousness – Babur thought reasonably: «If the problem doesn't pass, there's neither my son, nor my wife Mohim-begim next to me, it'll take at least

three months until messengers reach them and they come to Agra, and I can die in a week...no, tomorrow, no, today, right now!»

– “Be strong, master! Don’t lose hope!” – Takhir prayed. – “We have overcome so many deaths with you!”

– “But we...didn’t have...such a thing, Takhirdjan? Takhirbek, come to me!” – Babur said discontinuously.

Takhir supported Babur, when he again bent over the china basin – «how long can it last?!» - spitting something red, and wiped his sweaty face and neck. Seeing that Babur was breathing heavily, and tears were coming off his eyes with sharp pain inside, Takhir felt unhappy because of unavailability to take even a part of the suffering to himself, and sometimes it seemed to him that he had eaten the poison too – that’s how sorry he was for Babur.

During one short break between vomit onsets they let the one who had questioned the caught, to exhausted Babur who was lying with his eyes closed.

– “Report the fact of the matter, only the fact”, – Yusuf warned him whispering.

And the main thing which Babur was to find out was Bayda’s confession. The queen confirmed that it was her who had decided to poison the strange shah and found the required people; it was her revenge for her son. The questioner tried to find out from her whether the conspirators were concerned with Rano Sangram. But Bayda refused to answer, and without Babur’s order they didn’t dare to torture her.

– “She...will answer!” – Babur said with trembling voice: convulsion began again. – “And he, he... the mean cook! I hired him...trusted him! I ate food cooked by him. And he betrayed me!” – He broke cold sweat. Doctor Yusufi gave a sign – it was time to leave.

– “My lord, these evildoers must be given into a thousand torments. So that others wouldn’t dare to do such things!”

– “Those, three of them...put them to death, as a custom! (According to the traditions of those times to attempt the ruler’s life was the greatest crime, and the criminals were to be executed with the most painful death. Cook Bahlul’s skin was torn off his body while being alive. Ahmed had been quartered. And the slave, who had delivered the poison to the palace, was thrown under elephant, and treading on)... Bayda... after.

– “I obey and submit!”

The doctor Yusufi had fought for Babur's life two days and two nights. He finally sighed with relief:

— "Thank God! Our master was born for the second time...Now; you need to drink milk, my lord. And try to sleep as much as possible."

Babur tried to, but he went to sleep very seldom. Most of the time he simply laid with his eyes closed. And he often saw a black hole in front of him, where he had spent forty eight hours. He was on the very edge, very close to the fall! The strongest feeling he had experienced after those terrible days, was the feeling of life which had returned to him. No matter that it was just a sparkle, a moment, - but they, the sparkle and the moment were more valuable than all the riches and wealth, all the fame and thrones of the world. Something had burned down both in his exhausted soul and body, and the world seemed to be different to Babur. A man has only one life, and if a moment of life is so valuable, then who deep is misfortune of those who had lost their lives not having reached Babur's years?.. And his enemy, Ibrahim Lodi, was four years younger than him too. And the queen Bayda, criminal and hot-tempered, couldn't she forgive Babur just for his calling her his sworn mother in front of people? Victory is delightful but dangerous too. You overestimate yourself: your strength, your influence on people. Otherwise he wouldn't have trusted the cook who had used to serve Bayda for so many years. There was challenge, self-conceit in this action. If he didn't have too high opinion about himself, that he was an expert of recognizing people of this country, wouldn't he notice the hidden hatred in the eyes of Bayda? Just now he recalled a snaky coldness in the shine of her eyes. And he recalled Mohim-begim's words – which wounds, made by a sword of a stranger, don't heal for ages. What a self-deception is not to think over these words and deny their correctness! And so he became a victim of Bayda's deceit and of self-deception. But if it takes ages for such wounds to heal, will Babur's life be long enough to lay a bridge between this country and his one? Or is it self-deception too, a mirage? Was it a punishment for innocent blood of those who, having not even taken weapon into his hands, suffered from his campaigns?

He felt worse after these thoughts. The future seemed to be gloomier than the present.

And still, his strength took what it deserved. A beam of light which shone in darkness, grew wider and brighter. He didn't have

vomit any more. He slept calmly at night, thought he wanted to get up from his bed, but he had dizziness.

– “Weakness will pass!” – The doctor assured him. – “My lord, you must stay in bed, and gain strength. How long? For a week! I’ll bleed you. Your blood must be cleaned from the remaining poison.”

– “I’ve grown weak already”, – Babur objected. – “Don’t bleed me. I need to go out to the people, to beks as soon as possible. Because they probably gossip that I’m hopeless and powerless. We have a war with a strong enemy in front of us. He gloats over the misfortunes, and trouble-makers raise their heads.”

...Soon after recovery Babur sent a letter to Kabul where he described what had happened in such calm and accurate manner that he decided to add the letter to the book “Past”. But even there, through the calm tone in the letter, his soul broke, stricken by realization of the fact that death had passed very close to him. “Up to date I didn’t have an idea how good and sweet it is to live. There’s a line:

*Those who stood on the threshold of death, they know the value of life.*

I recall that terrible accident and feel uneasy”.

On the third day after the turning point in the illness following shah’s order beks, important authorities, representatives of districts gathered. Babur entered the hall through back doors and went up the dais slowly, and sat down on the throne calmly. After the elite had taken the authorized places by the seniority, a sign was given and the criminal Bayda was brought to the hall. Two Novkers stood by her.

The old woman in white dress, had her head raised high, but still lowered it in front of the throne. She noticed the shine of golden stairs and legs of the throne, the shine and sick yellowness of Babur’s face, and his sunken eyes. Bayda cheered up and straightened quickly. Questioning started. The official, who started it, immediately asked her who, besides her and those executed, took part in preparing the vicious attempts at the great shah’s life.

– “It’s not an attempt, it’s my revenge!” – Bayda declared. – “Revenge for the blood spilled by your shah! Bahlul, Ahmed, and the slaves, who helped me, were hero avengers. And they died with a courageous death. Now it’s my turn. I’m not afraid of death! I’m full of grief after my son’s death. Kill me, and scatter my ashes before the wind!”

Bayda spoke Farsi. Everyone understood her. And everyone was silent. It was clear to Babur: fearless Bayda came here ready to accept death, she wanted to die – and that's why she threw every word like an arrow, and waited for furious Babur to call executors, and order to use the most severe torture instruments against her, an unarmed mother. And then, the victory would be hers, the rumor about her bravery would spread, and the memory about her would live forever. Worship of the memory about her – that's what she wanted!

And the shah kept himself from becoming angry. He had to win Bayda, as he had won poison in his body, - with his patience and firmness (a spasm ran along his body, reminding of recent pain, but nobody noticed anything.)

Babur kept silent. Karoni spoke:

- "Don't pretend to be a heroine-avenger; you are sultan Ibrahim's mother! You behaved meanly, having betrayed shah's trust!.."
- "Shut up, betrayer! I had to gain his confidence in order to accomplish my plan!"

- "You betrayed the blessed name of a mother! You cried with tears emotionally in front of all of us, when our master exalted you, having declared you his adopted mother."

- "Oh, no! Those were tears from disgust. I can't consider myself a mother of the one, who had brought death to my Ibrahim!"

Babur kept silent here too. Karoni raised his voice:

- "But your son had forces ten times larger than Shah Babur had. And if your son had won, he wouldn't have left any of his enemies alive, I know it. War is war! If you had any feeling of justice in your heart, you wouldn't have used poison in such a insidious way. Shah Babur fought honestly, saber against saber on the battle-field!"

- "I'm a woman, and I can't fight with a saber in my hands! Poison was my saber. Stranger conquerors killed thousands of our men in the field of Panipat. They spread the seeds of death across India. How many mothers, like me, wear white dress, weeping bitter tears, how many widows faggot themselves on funeral flames? Poison, which I gave, was made of the seeds of those deaths, which stranger-conquerors have spread! This poison was sodden with bitter tears of widows and orphans!"

Beks became noisy. One bearded man bowed to Babur and proposed:

– “My lord, it’s enough of listening to this wild old woman! Let executioners cut her tongue!”

– “Yes, right, let them cut me into pieces, let them quarter me like they did with Ahmed”, – Bayda yelled with fury. – “I’m not afraid, not afraid!”

Should he martyrize this defenseless woman? Oh, that’s a great threat! What will mothers of his children say about it? What will Mohim-begim tell? He recently finished a chapter about Herat in his book – about Khadicha-begim’s death. She was as insidious and perfidious woman as Bayda is. But after she was killed by the wild bull, Mansur-bahshi, taught by Sheybani-khan, she turned innocent in people’s memory, and her death still causes indignation of many people, and contempt for Sheybani. And he, Babur, having pledged to write only the truth, had those feelings when mentioned Khadicha – victim of violence.

What should he do in order not to cause contempt for himself?

Beks were noisy, they demand Bayda’s execution.

– “Throw her under a wild elephant! Let him tread her down!”

– “Put her into a sack and throw from a high minaret!”

Babur gave a sign.

Everybody became silent.

– “There’s only one execution”, – Babur started gently, - “for this old woman. It’s more terrible than death ... You have heard that her heart bleeds for all the mothers, widows and orphans, and she made her poison of their tears. It’s a lie. Her son always waged war with Pendjab, Bengaly, Gvalior and many other neighbors. How many people died each year in these wars, dear Malikdod, tell us?”

– “Within the last three years about sixty thousand from our side”, – Karoni answered quickly.

– “Here, you’ve heard it too... And the son of this old woman had been sitting on this throne”, – Babur hit the elbow-rest of the throne, - “for ten years! There’re many people in India. It’s enough for wars, for self-destruction. Sultan Ibrahim hired mercenaries; it is good that he had much money too. He saved gold, didn’t spend it on buildings, and only hired warriors, so that hundreds of thousands would die for him. And they died. And it was very often because of Sultan Ibrahim’s lack of talent as a military leader. We saw in Panipata. Leaders are evaluated not only by their victories, but by losses too. We lost two thousand warriors at Panipata. And Sultan Ibrahim led the battle so

lubberly that lost thirty thousand – besides, most of them died not from our sabers and guns, but from his own elephants... and Sultan Ibrahim himself might be a victim of his own white elephant, I don't know it for sure. Hey, mother of Ibrahim!" – Babur half-rose. – "If Bayda is so conscientious and her heart bleeds for orphans and widows left after the dead warriors, then why did she let those dozens of thousands die in useless wars? Why didn't she stop her son? Why didn't she keep him from useless bloodshed?"

– "I'm a mother only, and I can't rule over the ruler!" – Bayda answered, changing to defense.

– "And we came here in order to put an end to the fratricidal war! And we unite this great country into a large and strong state! We'll build and equip it! We'll accomplish what we've decided to! And for the old insidious and perfidious woman the most terrible punishment will be: regardless of all her wishes, her poison, and her rage we'll live here and do what neither she, nor her son Ibrahim were able to do!"

– "Wise words!" – Malikdod Karoni said with a sigh of relief.

Babur won the duel – everybody saw it.

– "As this old conspirator cheers for widows and orphans, as she says, – I order... Abdulkarim-bek!"

A stout bek rose from the left row:

– "I listen to you, my lord!"

– "I charge you... to deprive Bayda-hanum of her riches and using them build a "Charity House" on the bank of Djamna River. Let her servants work there, and distribute alms to orphans and widows from her treasury daily. Distribute alms until her treasury becomes empty."

– "Everything will be done as you order my lord!"

– "Well, and what about her... this old Bayda-hanum, dear Abdulkarim-bek, protects and guards her until her last day!"

– "How?" – Abdulkarim bek was taken aback. – "Won't she be executed?"

– "I have told everything."

So, won't there be execution? And won't the coldness of expected and wanted though still frightful death grip her? Bayda felt a warm breathing of life, and her soul shuddered, softened, as if some spring slewed round inside her.

Bayda closed her face with her hands and began crying.

## SIKRI (REAPPEARED HOPE)

### I

Mavlyana Hondamir, poet Shihob Muammi and Mudarris Ibragim Konyni invited by Babur went from Herat to Agra and spent almost three months in the trip.

They crossed the Haybar ridge, the height of which aroused a feeling of fear and depression, - they truly say: a human is a grain in front of the greatness of the nature created by the highest one. They crossed the deep Sind, passed thick jungles. Hondamir felt the boundless and greatness of the world for the first time in his life. And those places were huge and a horseman couldn't cross them in a week, and in a month. Now it was one state. It was impossible not to feel that you are moving across lands of the same state: from Balm to Kabul, from Kabul to Lahor, from Lahor to Delhi – there were orders signed by Babur everywhere. Everybody executed them smoothly.

The people invited by Babur had a chance to feel it. They and other craftsmen who went to Delhi from Maverannahr and Horasan were given respectful attention by rulers of districts, chiefs of boundary guards, customs inspectors, and hotels. "We're like some ambassadors", - once poet Muammi told, and it was the truth. Anyway, when they passed cities and settlements, where robbers could attack, Hondamir and his fellows were escorted by guards – a detachment of two hundred warriors.

And in caravan-sarays "the distinguished guests of the shah" were placed in the best rooms, fed for free (and filling), giving out rice, meat, oil and some money for the trip. And if they needed to change horses, roads and post-office supervisors gave reserves in the first place.

During their trip Hondamir often met merchant caravans and real ambassadors who were in a hurry to India, to Babur. After Babur became victorious over Rano Sangram's forces in the battle by Sikri (fifty versts to the west of Agra) more impressively than in the battle by Panipata, the number of rulers, who sent their ambassadors to him, increased – some of them, congratulated him, some expressed loyalty and devotion, others proposed peace and harmony. The ambassador from Tebriz, whom Hondamir met in Lahora, was carrying very interesting gifts from shah Tahmasp, the son of Ismail, who had

inherited the Iranian throne after his father. Among tilt carts there was one which was gilded and placed on the back of a white camel. There were two young beauty girls: Shah Tahmasi wanted to increase the harem of Shah Babur.

And on one of the stations before Lahor the historian met ambassadors from Samarqand and Tashkent. Now even the staunchest enemies of Babur – sheybanids – recognized the new state, founded in India. However, Babur wanted to erase his past himself: his ambassadors visited Samarqand and Tashkent with rich presents from India. And now Kuchkinchi-khan sent seven camels with maize, excellent sayaki, sweetest dried apricots from Kanibadam, strong and flavoured Bukhara wines, rare dishes famous in Maverannahr, and added two hundred good horses. Babur accepted the Samarqandian ambassador in the palace, built in "Shaht Bihisht" garden on the bank of Djamna river, with ceremony, which were "only worth of kings", - the han's ambassador boasted to Hondamir on his way back.

– "Hey, mavlyana, I saw so much gold, I have never seen so much gold anywhere. Shah Babur sits on the throne made of gold. There's a large carpet in front of the throne. Gold, which is paid to the shah by rulers of districts yearly, is poured on that carpet. We saw it with our eyes how the carpet disappeared and a large pile of coins grew on top of it gradually."

Hondamir realized that Babur made such an impression advisedly, knowing greediness of sheybanids. Having grinned, he asked:

– "Noble ambassador, did you get a special "ambassador allotment?"

– "Shah Babur ordered to give us clothes covered with jewels: and said that both dresses and pearls and jewels are ours now. After that he cut off a large portion of gold on the carpet – a present to my master Kuchkinchi-khan. We didn't even count the golden coins..."

– "You must have made an agreement?"

– "Yes, now we can freely visit each other. We may have trade or exchange of goods. We'll get silk, spices and different wonderful wares. And we'll sell dry and fresh fruits and horses to them... Though the road is long, they suppose that the number of caravans will increase: Shah Babur canceled the tax for merchants all over his lands. The income of merchants – Uzbek, Tajik, Hindu, Persian, and Arabian – will increase significantly. Merchants and craftsmen are satisfied

with the shah. We are too. Quite. But to tell the truth, we didn't like one innovation by Shah Babur."

– "What is it?"

– "They say that it's prohibited to drink wine in his state. And Babur, they say, confessed in hard drinking and publicly recanted to quit drinking alcohol. They even destroyed the cups. A special caravan from Gazni had been going for two months – fourteen camels carried the best kinds of wine to Agra. And when they arrived, Shah Babur ordered to pour salt into it. Can you imagine: they've put a ban on wine selling and import ... they have feasts without wine now...it's boring!"

Hondamir already knew the news, which had made the messenger of Kuchkinchi-han. On the way to Babur he read his decree, which had been sent to all districts and started with the words of humility: «Praise the god who loves those repenting and heeding the request of those who look for help». Hondamir remembered: it said in the decree that struggle for lively faith, for its triumph had to be started with struggle with oneself, with sinful habits. It said graphically that "my victorious servants, rushing for the triumph of lively faith, threw the golden and silver cups and jugs away on the ground of shame and humiliation; they used to stand in splendor on dastarkhan, with their number and shine of theirs like stars in the sky». And having thrown away, «broke them into parts, having distributed the fragments to the poor and indigent, - and we too, whether Allah almighty wishes, we'll break idols...»

That was what had happened: Babur really broke the heathen Rano Sangram completely. Well, and what about wine prohibition, it made Hondamir glad, but not sad. The historian knew that people would still drink wine, but the decree at least would keep those inclined to drinking wine. Hondamir still remembered the sad story of Huseyn Baykara and his sons. When Babur arrived in Herat for the second time – nine years had already passed, – Hondamir saw with uneasiness that he, another Timur descendant, began to drink too much wine too, and Hondamir thought then: «Will this man of rare talent drink away his talent too? «

That's why the story by the messenger made "the guest of shah" glad.

Hondamir was over fifty, and his health was left for good.

He didn't hesitate too long before he accepted Babur's invitation and started his long and exhausting trip. Heat terrified, fickleness of state authorities full of falsities was disgusting... But Hondamir's life in Herat had been so terrible for the last few years that he was drawn by Babur that he made a decision. He wanted his unknown future to have base, and he saw it in Babur. He believed in him. And when he met something good on the way and it was the evidence of good affairs and plans of Babur in this new state - Hondamir's mood became good, and the fear in front of the unknown future disappeared.

Having entered Agra, Hondamir saw new beautiful buildings made of stone and marble finishing, new gardens with gilded summerhouses with grass cover on the roofs and multicolored flower beds.

Now Babur seemed to be more powerful than the scientists used to know previously.

Because of illnesses Babur became very thin, and no strength could be seen in his body anymore. Hondamir noticed how weakened Babur was only under the sunlight, when the two of them went for a walk to the Sikri Mountain.

That mountain was a miracle, somehow having grown from the ground in the center of a green valley; - it reminded Babur of Buvratag Mountain in Fergana valley by Osh. The only difference was that there was Buvarasay River by the foot of that Fergana Mountain, and here a clear lake was by the foot of Sikri.

Babur showed with pride newly built marble hujra-summerhouses, a beautiful building for shah feasts and receptions, hidden by dense trees on the flank of a hill. Stone stairs ran from the mountain to the lake. Babur spoke about new constructions with excitement. Hondamir glanced at shah's face, - cheek-bones upthrusted, wrinkles were around his eyes, and covered his forehead. Oh, how quickly Babur grew old!

They began to go down to the lake. Babur as if he guessed Hondamir's thoughts, said:

- "My destiny is strange, mavlyana. The more I improve the life around me, the more I wither myself."

- "Not so quickly...but shouldn't you really take care of yourself too, master?"

– “It looks like I should! But...The larger the state is, the more difficult, I'd say even the more painful it is to govern it. I didn't know the strength of the torments when I decided to found a large state here. Day and night – work, troubles, struggle, struggle, struggle...I live here like between active volcanoes...Shall I have enough strength to accomplish my plans – I don't know it.”

– “Enough, master. I'm sure in it. You are not even fifty yet – you are a strong mature man.”

– “But after I arrived in India, it seems to me that each year I lose five or even ten years of life assigned to me by the god. Fever, insomnia ...”

That morning Hondamir read a new divan by Babur – verses, written here, in India. Listening to shah's complaints, he recalled a rubai from the divan:

*Day by day I'm in a fever, and I shall hardly heal it!  
Night after night I'm awake: why have I come so far?  
My heat, my dreams are like sadness and firmness:  
My firmness decreases, and sadness increases.*

Babur's eyes were red after insomnia, and were watering under even the weakest wind.

“Does he still struggle against drinking?” – Hondamir thought. – Because the divan had the lines:

*I vowed drinking, I tied myself with pledge.  
What shall I do, how to live, whose advice to follow?  
Having repented, the inebrious pledge themselves not to drink.  
I pledged myself not to drink and repent myself of it.*

– “Master, I heard there are doctors who know how to cure insomnia.”

– “Yusufi, my doctor from Herat, tried to cure it. But he could do nothing! “You need rest”, - he says “forget state affairs”, - says. “Don't write verses at night”, - he says. It's impossible! How is it possible – to the head of the state and not to take care of it? And I only forget these troubles when I write verses or my book. But I can't find time for writing in Agra. I couldn't stand it, my dear, and so I decided to walk to Sikri a little. It's calm here. And easier to write...I've written long...I am used to it – I write during sleepless nights.”

“He is still ill and exhausts himself with continuous work”, – Hondamir thought. – “Brain has no rest, that's why insomnia is”. But he shouldn't speak it openly, and take the side of doctor Yusufi. He

shouldn't do it out of respect. And also because Babur never had mercy on himself in anything, revealing his heart, strength completely, and was glad to work with such tension. It was mistake and cruel to take away his satisfaction.

– “Let God grant your strength and vivacity!” – Hondamir wished Babur warmly.

Babur didn't want to speak about himself anymore. He asked about another thing:

– “Mavlyana, for how many years have you been writing your “Book of a close friend's life”?”

– “Eleven, master. I don't think that I've finished it...I couldn't write it in Herat. All the recent years sunnits and shiits, taking Herat from each other, burned it in a fire, or froze it out.”

– “I understand...Do you remember when we talked upstairs, on Unsii minaret, you asked with uneasiness: “Is the lucky star of Herat going down?”. Your alarm came true, unfortunately.”

– “Good luck turned away from Herat. And Samarqand closed down embraces for us! Shiite-sunni hostility cut links between Maverannahr and Iran. And those links were beneficial for many generations; so many talents achieved perfection owing to them! Ignoramus sultans put Maverannahr at mercy of superstitious and dark sheyhs. One scientist from Samarqand told almost crying that the observatory of Ulugbek turns into ruins. And the ruler of the city does not care about it. Walls of the building are taken to pieces, and bricks are taken away for patching up holes in their houses and sheds.”

– “We build new palaces and medrese in another country, and they destroy theirs there... It's a bitter turning point, isn't it, mavlyana? I left my old motherland, and devote all my strength to the new one, India, but there are periods when I think I'm an ungrateful son. And an unhappy man!”

– “Everything happens according to Allah's will. This is so. A man can't change what had been destined for him. This is so. Here, I followed your example and came to India! At my own will. And being powerless to change events, want to unravel them, to find, and understand the main thread of history – the subject of area of my knowledge, my science.”

Babur liked the words of Hondamir. Having neared his horse to Hondamir's, he went by him.

– “Oh, you are reasoning correctly, mavlyana! Our wishes and aspirations are interlaced with the tangle of events. But not only them there are many things in this tangle. History is boundless, and always changeable. It is a circulation of the dome of the sky. Forces regulating them are the “main thread”. Am I right?”

Hondamir listened attentively without interfering in the reasoning of Babur. He went on:

– “And where is our place? Is it on the place of this or that little star? No, I’ll tell it differently... We are on a mountain. If the mountain under our feet gets down, then, no matter how hard you tried to get higher, you move down with the mountain anyway. Such a landslide brought me here to Maverannahr. But if the circulating wheel... no, if the mountain under feet grows, its inner strength rises, then you move up faster than if only you were climbing up. We need to use our mind, foresight and bravery, to find a growing mountain, step on it, and India seems to me to be such a mountain, mavlyana... And so I plan to accomplish here what I haven’t accomplished in Samarcand and Herat.”

– “Right, the history often changes its direction. There were times when science and art in Mavarannahr and Khorasan grew, and were growing mountains. Beruniy in Horezm, Abu Ali ibn Sina in Bukhara, Firdousi in Tusa, Makmud Kashgari and Yusuf Has Hadjib in Balasugun – all of them were great men, and both of us agree that their activity contains the sense of the history. Later hordes of Chingiskhan stopped the “tangle” movement and “mountain” growth for decades. With the activity of Ulugbek in Samarcand, Djami, Navoi in Heart, a new turning point took place, new great talents developed... Circulation of the dome of the sky – it’s a good saying, master.” – Hondamir seemed to recall who he was talking with. – “Evil forces decided that there are too many great people and sent nomads of Sheybani to us. Sciences, arts, architecture – everything fell into decay... Talented people reached for you to India, master. I think a new turning point will take place here... Of course, it’s hard to live on a foreign land, but knowing that in such an endless and tangled world there is a state India, where they honor mind, science and art, - oh, it’s delightful, it gives more strength.” – Hondamir smiled: – “Now I hope to finish “The book of a close friend’s life” – in the shadow of your patronage, master.”

– “I’m glad to hear your decision and ready to render any assistance you will need.”

– “Your obedient servant has been working in Herat at the library of Mir Alisher for many years. And spent many hours at rare manuscripts at the library of sultan Huseyn Baykara... Those libraries are far away...”

Hondamir knew that Babur also had a large library where fifty people worked and there might be such rare manuscripts which were absent in Herat. What is a historian without manuscripts, without sources? Not everyone was allowed to enter the library of shah. Hondamir became silent, but Babur continued:

– “For our sake you came from so far – so, can’t we open all the doors in front of you, mavlyana? I gave an order already; the keeper of my books, Abdulla, will help you. There are many Hindu books. Abdulla manages scientist-translators who know Sanskrit very well. Take one of them at your disposal...”

– “It is hard to express my gratitude to you, master! But if you let me, I have one more request, an impudent one, my lord.”

– “Please, mavlyana, tell, what is it?”

– “Do you remember that in Herat you read an extract of a book of your life? I know you’ve been writing it for a long time. You made me interested then. If there are ready chapters which I can meet...oh, they would be a source of delight and wisdom for me.”

For some time Babur rode the horse in silence. He looked at the head of the horse, which was moving its ears keenly. He didn’t want to comply with this request of Hondamir. Babur hasn’t only been writing the book “Past”...well, let it be “Baburname”, but rewriting it too for the last two years. Why? There are two reasons. First: once its chapters were exposed to a hurricane rain – they start here all of a sudden, - the tent overturned, some pages from the book were lost irrevocably, others were spoiled, many of them were mixed up... And the second, prior reason to rewrite “Baburname”: he wanted to give it more unity ...and to make it more truthful.

– “I’ll think it over, mavlyana”, – Babur answered dully.

Deep in the garden located by the foot of Sikri mountain there was a spring with cold water. Babur wanted to drink that water – it was nice to sit and have a rest there too. The murmurous stream brought clean grains of sand from somewhere underground; they were hardly seen because of the sun reflecting in the water.

Hondamir said, shaking off drops of water from the tips of his fingers:

– “How quiet and peaceful it is around...It's hard to imagine those two years ago here, in Sikri, a bloody battle took place.”

– “Yeah, I think the battle against Rano Sangram was the most cruel and bloody of all my battles... By the way, in “Baburname” I described events which preceded the battle and the battle itself in details. In the evening I'll give you newly written pages and you'll tell me your true opinion... That's why I called you, dear mavlyana, in order to have a wise advisor close to me, the one who would understand the value of a word.”

– “You award me with such an honor, my master, which I have never been awarded in my life!”

– “Both of us are modest apprentices of the great Mir Alisher ...”

## II

Hondamir had been given a villa with three rooms and a wide carved terrace with a view on a smooth surface of the lake. It was in the north side of Sikri Mountain.

Hondamir began to read Babur's book after having evening meal. He remembered his impressions by extracts which had been read by Babur in Herat. At that time Hondamir had been surprised and even offended a little by the simplicity of the style.

In the manuscript, the simplicity was felt stronger:

«There are many flowers in Hindustan”, – Babur wrote. – “Here djasun – its stalk is high, a little higher than rose bushes. The flower of djasun is brighter than the flower of a pomegranate, and is like a scarlet rose with its size, but scarlet rosebud lets only one flower, while djasun when blossoming lets another stalk as thick as a finger, and when blossoming petals appear on the stalk too. It comes out a double flower, peculiar. Djasun flowers are very beautiful, but do not remain long, they fade in a day ...»

«In order to calm my people and strengthen the camp, I ordered to build special wooden tripods, where bullock-carts couldn't be placed, seven or eight Karis from each other, to tie them with tannery belts of bull skin... As I've mentioned before, embarrassment and fear spread among my warriors because of recent events, rumors and gossips. And the astrologer Muhammad Sharif, the man with an evil heart, without telling anything intelligent about the upcoming battle, frightened everybody, telling that the star of war was in the west and anyone who would start a battle being on the west side, would be

defeated. We were to the west. Who asked him to tell such things, talkative rogue? He undermined the spirit of my nukers even more. But I didn't listen to him, keeping on doing what was necessary for preparing for the battle ...»

So plainly and pictorially Babur was telling about what he had seen and experienced. Some places carried away but they had a lack of a "high style", graceful allegories and delicacy, to which Hondamir-reader got used to. Hondamir kept catching even Babur's verbiage in his book.

But was it good? Was it allowed for Padishah's book of life?

Hondamir had been taught and nursed by his father, the famous historian Mirhond. His father liked to say that historical essays were written for the most noble, the highest, and they knew enough bitter and rough truths, that's why they were looking for clean smooth-talking in the books. One ought to state events in a high style with splendid comparisons and epithets for master's delight.

And now Babur's book unwillingly attracted and at the same time puzzled Hondamir.

For example, this extract... Babur attached his answer to Khumayun's letter where he taught his son: «Write simply. You are trying to write too delicately, and thus artificial and odd places appear. Write without intentional beauty, clearly and understandably, so there will be less trouble both for you and for the one who reads your letter».

The strange shah knowingly overthrew the high smooth-talking, while Hondamir used to be a passionate follower of it. And now such an intention offended the historian.

Having stopped reading, Hondamir went outside to the terrace, looked at the calm night garden, found a moon path leading to the lake and in his imagination Babur was standing next to him.

Hondamir had been writing "Habib-ussiyar", his main book – "Book of close friend's life" for more than ten years. He wrote so devotedly as if he considered it to be his duty: smooth-talking, he dissolved his "insignificant ego" in the style. He used to follow, and to adapt to it. Bringing forward one's ego is a bad form.

But Babur wasn't shy in front of himself. Moreover, he wrote both about his bad luck, and mean human behavior, god forgives him. It was clear when one read: «warriors of Islam – trees from grove of braveness – lined up like cedars; «their formation was straight and

stable, like a prophet following the law»; «the names of pedestrian warriors – are among lions from the grove of braveness, among the bravest on the field of bravery». But it was taken from a story of victory written not by Babur but Sheyh Zayn, and added to the book just for avoiding retelling facts about the strength of the armies and the locations. Also, in the tremendous story about the attempt to poison the shah, Babur confessed (and added to his book of life!), that he "had been vomiting in the rest room abundantly".

«Oh lord, I don't understand anything», - the historian thought. – "It's rough, but still attracts... with the boldness to write the truth, the way this intelligent Shah Zahiriddin Babur writes. I write the way everyone does, reiterations are inevitable, monotony, and here no reiterations are present and the style is original. And the man is special!»

Hondamir returned to his room. He read the manuscript again and again. He admitted that no historical book had given him such accurate and true image of events – «the tangle of events». And the way Babur criticized himself, wrote about his sufferings and mistakes – it attracted Hondamir most of all, attracting with its trust and sincerity.

Hondamir again found the lines which had astonished him: «Up to date I didn't have an idea how good and sweet it is to live». Such a prose was worth of poetical saying, which was added by Babur: «Those who stood on the threshold of death, they know the value of life ».«

Reading "Baburname", Hondamir imagined a mortal man equal to him, who was becoming more understandable, closer and dearer to his heart.

King Masters don't like to be similar to common people! At first Hondamir wanted to understand the reason of using such a strange style. Really, why should Shah Babur try very hard to use a high style? He is the lord and so he allows himself to be plain, and act in spite of common standards.

This thought reconciled him with the astonishing uncommonness of Babur's style. Later Hondamir didn't think about the style at all – he was carried away by the events described by Babur with amazing details and rare frankness.

Hondamir had been reading the manuscript all the night and all the next day ...

Babur had to leave for Agra on business, and two days later in the morning he had to return to Sikri. Due to heat in the daytime, he preferred to ride a horse at night.

The shah looked even more exhausted than three days before. But he asked Hondamir in a cheerful voice:

- "Were you not bored while I was absent, mavlyana?"
- "All this time I have been talking to you, master."

Uninterruptedly!"

- "Haven't you finished reading yet?"
  - "I've read it all in one night and reread it many times later. I can't think of anything else."
  - "Mavlyana, don't spare me, tell the truth."
  - "The truth? I'll tell! You've stricken me."
- Hondamir said it seriously, with sadness in his eyes.
- "How...could I strike...you?"
  - "With your simplicity! With simplicity and clearness of your retelling you showed me vainness of our usual delicate compound "high" style."

Babur smiled with relief:

- "Ah, that's what you mean! But you should put yourself in my place. I didn't have time to beautify my style, especially because I can't do it."
- "And this is good that you didn't have time...for trifles." - Hondamir didn't accept (or didn't understand) Babur's joke. - "I congratulate you from the heart, my lord, - previously there was no such a wonderful book in Turk!"
- "Well, I still have to finish it. There are lost chapters too."
- "I'm sure that you'll restore them. And add new ones. But...I'm thinking about it, about this wonderful book, - there was no similar to it either in Farsi, or in Turk. I've been thinking for a long time, master. But "Hamsa" by Mir Alisher is the greatest poetic work written in Turk, but "Baburname" for me, the man writing prose and history. The two works stand together in my heart."
- "Oh, you overstate the significance of my work, but I'm grateful to you, mavlyana, for the generosity of your heart..." - Babur grinned.
- "But I'll continue this book, this "Baburname"; tell me openly about its disadvantages too."

Hondamir began to think. Then he decided not to hide anything - neither small, nor large disagreements.

- "My lord, I'll tell only about some pages... You cite very many details about Herat, Huseyn Baykaka and his emirs: but there are inaccuracies in dates and names."
- "I need your help, mavlyana."
- "I've written out my remarks on a separate paper; it's in the room of my garden hujra. I'll give it to you when returning the manuscript."
- "I'll appreciate it."
- "But if you allow me, my lord, I have a consideration of a different kind."
- "Please, tell it, mavlyana."
- "We, historians, truly know", - Hondamir started, - "that no state, especially a large one, had been established without pain and blood. And even the man, the son and descendant of Adam, is being born the same way... So, you've established a large state in Afganistan, conquered Deli sultanat and other lands in India. Of course, there were bloody wars. For a stronger effect you've ordered to kill people from tribes which were your worst enemies. You've cited those orders in "Baburname". And you also wrote that three thousand men had been cut by your Novkers at Baur fortress in North India. A few hundred of captured prisoners had been killed by your archers near Panipata... Truth is a great goal, master. I understand it. But won't such details leave after-pains in the hearts of your descendants who will read your book? Isn't the care about fame is not your care? Can't you leave out such details in your book?"

Babur felt his mouth getting dry and sour. Not being in a hurry to answer he sat down by the spring scooped the clear water with his palm. It was clear and cool and brought relief.

- "I understand, mavlyana, that the man who supports me with his heart, says it. Well, it's hard for me to write such details too... Once I saw Sohibkiron Timur, the shaker of the universe, in my dream. He calmed me: no wars, no blood. This is the way it is... And now I have insomnia...I trust details to the paper in order to relieve my soul. Let descendants know the details. They shouldn't think of us as of angels. They must know about our sufferings that occurred because of evil that others made and the evil made by us."

Hondamir knew some poems of Babur about such sufferings with double meaning: he imagined that Babur was exhausted not only by state affairs, but oppressed by inner struggle in his heart – the

struggle between the master, the shah and the poet, the artist. Shah Babur, looking forward to establishing and governing a strong and united state, couldn't avoid actions which were painful for a poet to recall, criticize and write later. The thing which took place between Alisher Navoi and Huseyn Baykara, it took place in Babur's heart – one heart of the same man.

– "Master, your words persuade more than my recent considerations. Really, bitter lessons taken from life experience can teach others. However we mustn't forget the main result... Do you remember to what you have compared your life there in Herat when you arrived there last time? Doesn't this spring remind you of anything?"

– "Yes, I remember. I told you that my life looked like a spring buried by mountain collapse."

– "Exactly, master. And how do you think, did the spring buried by collapse in Maverannahr made its way here, in India?"

– "You said a beautiful phrase, mavlyana. Yes, if I still have spring inside me, then it's my poems, creations... Don't object with me, I began to feel it a long time ago that the throne can't save either from decay or from oblivion. I'm not predetermined to return to my motherland by myself. Let my poems and Turk books return there... Ah, you don't know, mavlyana, how much I miss Andijan, Samarqand, and Tashkent. I grew up and became mature there."

Babur suddenly began to cry, and he lowered his eyes.

– "My, lord you told me that India became your second motherland. Your books will increase its fame too."

– "Last year I devoted my life to India, that's true. But from day to day it's becoming harder for me to fulfill cruel obligations of the shah."

– "Today the poet in your heart is dominating, master. But...if you hadn't lived a life of a master, you probably wouldn't have written "Baburname". Besides, haven't you come here being a shah, a commander?"

Hondamir wanted to reconcile the poet and the shah in Babur's heart very much.

– "Let's go, mavlyana, I'll take the manuscript." – Babur smiled exhausted and knowingly. – "Poet Babur and historian Babur want to finish it, before the militant shah Babur crashes another collapse on the spring."

## AGRA AGAIN (ENTANGLEMENT OF STARS)

### I

Unbearable summer heat came again. Babur spent all his time in his “shelter of solitude” working at “Baburname”, and he was thirsty all the time. He drank both hot tea and soft drinks but couldn’t slake his thirst. Once Takhir brought fresh white grapes from Samarqand on a golden tray. Babur was surprised:

– “Where is it from?”

– “From the “Hasht Bihisht” garden, master! Do you remember that you’ve planted grape grafts brought from Samarqand?”

Water drops were shining on recently washed golden bunches. “It looks like morning dew”, – Babur thought, having taken one bunch, raised it, and began to bite off grapes with his lips. He imagined that he travelled back to his childhood, to the banks of Syrdarys, to Samarqand and Andijan gardens. “Oh, lord, I’m grateful to you – the exhausting thirst is leaving and vivacity fills my body”.

– “It’s unbelievable!” – Babur was glad. – “Grape ripened on the banks of Djamna! The white Samarqand raisins without stones! No doubt, we must show it to Mohim. Takhirkbek, take the tray and let’s go to her.”

The previous autumn Mohim-begim arrived in Agra from Kabul. She lived in the palace which was in the garden Zerafshan where the shah liked to spend time alone.

Babur, followed by Takhir, cheerfully started to the palace, breathing in the humid air. The rain had just stopped but there still were clouds in the sky. Babur kept glancing back at the tray in Takhir’s hands: the grapes were shimmering with golden light and looked like a light beam which broke through clouds from Samarqand.

Mohim-begim was sitting at a low table on the edge of the palace terrace and was writing a letter. Having noticed Babur, she, as usual, stood up quickly and bowed to her husband.

– “Mohim, try our grapes too. Does it taste like Samarqandian or not?”

But she didn’t want anything at the moment. She took the tray from Takhir and put it on the table.

Takhir went outside having left the husband and wife alone.

Tears came off Mohim-begim's eyes, she couldn't speak, and Babur began to worry:

- "What's happened, Mohim? Did you cry?"
- "It's hard to breathe..."

Mohim was over forty years old, her face grew stout and hardened, and her figure grew heavy. She was used to dry mountain air of Kabul, and could hardly stand the stuffy moisture on the banks of Djamna. Having heard about the wearisome heat in India before, she was afraid of it and partly because of this reason she had kept herself from coming to Agra for three years. But her husband began to call her emphatically and she came.

- "It's hard for me too when it's raining", - Babur began to comfort his wife. - "Don't worry, you'll get used... Try the grapes!"

Mohim-begim wasn't in a mood to eat grapes, but still she tore two grapes and ate them in order to give pleasure to Babur, and said:

- "Ripened well. It's very delicious."
- "Were you writing a letter?"
- "Yes, to Khumayun... Master, it's not the rains that take my breath away but melancholy!"

And she began to speak fast, sobbing a little:

- "I miss Khumayun very much. It looks like you keep the son far from me on purpose! I was in Kabul - Khumayun was on the banks of Djamna and Gang. Now I'm in Agra, but Khumayun went to Balahshan. He established the order there, returned, and you immediately sent him to be a governor to the far Sambhal. Khumayun is there, where danger is! Whenever something goes bad in far districts, - you send Khumayun there! And I'm always in painful worries for my son, my heart is bleeding!"

- "But why do you worry so much, Mohim? By the way, the brave Khumayun asked to go to Sambhal shelter of solitude."

- "You don't worry because you have many children! And I have only him left alive, the only one! I buried three sons, three, how difficult is it for a mother?! Khumayun - is the only one!"

And Mohim began to cry bitterly.

In those tears and blames Babur saw not only mother's grief and uneasiness, but Mohim-begim's remaining offence at him: she was the only one who loved her husband devotedly and selflessly, though he had two more wives.

At this moment eight year old Gulbadan dressed in light colorful dress ran into the room, bowed to her father hurriedly, and began to hustle around, but having noticed that Mohim-begim was crying, she froze uneasily.

Babur could remark that Gulbadan and Hindol were her, Mohim's children too. But he kept himself back. And Mohim-begim went on:

– "Mirza Kamron is your son as Khumayun. But he lives peacefully with his mother in Lahor! Then why must my Khumayun be the only shield against problems?"

Babur was about to get angry.

– "Because he is my heir, he'll soon take my place, Mohim! Let him get used to difficulties. It was more difficult for me when I was at his age!"

– "But I'm a mother! I'm dying of longing and uneasiness... You don't care about my heart! You have other wives – they are younger."

Gulbadan stood in the middle of the room like rooted to the ground. It was the first time she listened to such a talk. The father turned away frowning. The mother was crying. But previously they behaved tenderly with each other! During the trip from Kabul to Agra the little Gulbadan felt anxiety of her mother, her looking forward to meeting the father. And how was the father glad to Mohim-begim's arrival! He met them on the bank of Djaloli Lake, he took the horse, which his wife was riding, at the bridle, and walked next to her for three versts. Gulbadan, the little curious Gulbadan, heard people telling that none of Muslim rulers had done such honors to one's wife previously.

Now the little Gulbadan couldn't understand what was happening between her parents. However, it was obvious that something bad was taking place.

Babur, having noticed his daughter's uneasiness, came to the table quickly, took a bunch of grapes from the tray and gave it to Gulbadan:

– "Here, have it, dear. And go for a walk to the garden."

Gulbadan left still being worried. Babur sat down next to his wife heavily.

– "Yes, Mohim, I must apologize to you. Shariat allows but doesn't oblige a Moslem to have three wives... And I'm restless, more than half of my life I spent in campaigns and battles. To have three

wives for me is an unforgivable mistake! None of my wives have been happy, though I wished happiness to you... Now, when I look at you I see rivalry between wives, enmity between children born by rivals... I hoped that all these troubles, which came from ancestors, wouldn't make our life a misery, Mohim... Alas, even Mohim, my sweetest, is crying bitterly because of these troubles! My sick soul is tearing apart looking at you suffering!"

Mohim-begin looked at the badly yellow face of Babur and noticed the sick yellowness for the first time. She wiped her tears quickly.

- "My master, don't offend at me. I'm a weak woman, you are a shah. To whom should I complain if not to you? Your sympathy is a joy for me ..."

- "Yes, I'm a shah, and all troubles are because of it, Mohim. My mistakes, sins – it's all because of them. It's because of the will to get a throne, and hold it firmly. In my youth I have walked barefoot in Dahkat Mountains, and tried to throw chains down. But I didn't find the savior who would save me from governing. Its load is too heavy for me now. I have one hope now: maybe Khumayun would take it away."

Mohim-begin suddenly realized what Babur decided. But she didn't want to believe her guess.

- "Mohim, continue writing your letter. And write on behalf of me: let Khumayun return to Agra as fast as possible. He'll take it while I'm alive... He'll take the throne. Write it, I'll put my signature."

- "Master, you know that Khumayun isn't looking forward to sitting on a throne! I only wanted our son to be next to us."

- "Write it down, let him return... To take the throne! Exactly for this... But I want my decision to be a secret for a while. For now, nobody besides you, Mohim, must know it."

Mohim-begin, finally believing in seriousness of Babur's decision, asked:

- "And you? Do you want to return to Kabul?"

- "Very soon I'll pass to my eternal rest, I feel it. Take my body to Kabul, and bury there... And I'll spend my last days in Agra ... I don't have much time to live left. But there are a lot of things which I want to write. Sure, the one who is busy with state affairs can't think of this. And now I'll write... I don't need either the throne, or palaces. My "shelter of solitude" here in the garden is enough for me. I'll manage

without servants, and without court circle, Takhir-oftobachi will be enough... Write to Khumayun about my decision frankly."

Mohim-begin was already sorry for having made her husband upset.

– "I'm sorry, master. I didn't have an idea... It's improbable, impossible! I can't write to my son that the father, whom he loves and respects, is going to leave the throne."

Babur rose quickly and promised firmly:

– "I'll write it myself then."

He went outside, to the yard and saw Gulbadan. The girl looked at him cautiously as if guessing that her father had spent a difficult time. Babur smiled and waved his hand to her.

## II

When the letter from father came to Sambhal, Khumayun was very sick. But having read the letter, and found out the secret decision of Babur, he told his people:

– "Take me to Agra quickly!"

In Delhi his high temperature grew higher and dangerous fever started. Hindubek immediately sent a messenger to Agra, and called the best doctors in Delhi. Khumayun had to recover there.

But none of the medicine could help. And the doctors couldn't even diagnose to him. It was something like black fever, but what and how to cure? Khumayun was burning day and night, and grew black as if charred.

Mohim-begin came from Agra. She rode the horse: it would have taken more time going in cart. She had been riding without stops for two days.

She decided that it would be calmer and cool for the sick to go by ship. So, Khumayun reached Agra by ship. Eight Novkers brought Khumayun in covered stretcher to Zerafshan garden. When Babur saw his son, lying unconscious, something broke inside him, and the palanquin, shaking on the shoulders of Novkers, looked like funeral stretcher.

At times Khumayun was delirious. Once after a difficult night, in early cool dawn he slightly opened his eyes. He recognized his father, leaning over the head of his bed. He wanted to stand up, began to toss about the bed, but threw his head back again.

- "We...on service... without you... no, no..." - the sick became delirious again. Khumayun yelled: - "Forward, along the center... Beat them! Back... Stand!"

Khumayun shot up in his bed, leaped over his side and fell unconscious again.

Palace doctors couldn't find the cure against unknown illness too. Mohim-begin was crying bitterly. Babur suffered beyond expression. It seemed to him that he was guilty in Khumayun's fatal illness, running his son the risk, making him go through fire and water. People used to depend on Babur in difficult situations and everybody waited for salvation from him. But this time he was powerless. He himself needed encouragement and support. Old sheyh-ul-islam gave it in an unexpected way.

- "My lord, believe, God would send down healing to Mirza Khumayun. But if the best doctors couldn't do anything", - sheyh-ul-islam spoke in a enigmatic voice, - "it means that this God's test requires you to make a sacrifice. A great value must be given to in glorification of Allah."

«A great value? « Mohim-begin had already offered saint sacrifices – cut sheep and distributed their meat to the poor people. Compassionate benefit is always pleasing for the god. What "great value" else did the taksyr mean?

- "My lord, you must donate a large diamond."

- "Which? Is it Kohinur?"

Sheyh-ul-islam, agreeing, nodded. Babur was perplexed: he encroached on the diamond, knowing that its value is equal to many pounds of gold.

- "Taksyr, to whom must I give the diamond... whom should I sacrifice it in glorification of Allah?"

Donations in glorification of Allah were taken by ecclesiastics, and their head was him, sheyh-ul-islam. It means... But there was something in Babur's voice when asking, owing to what sheyh-ul-islam didn't dare to say "to me" and answered with hesitation:

- "In glorification of Allah you can take it to the burial-vault of the saint Murtiz-Ali."

The burial-vault of the sheyh and the most valuable diamond in the world are the basis of bases of rich treasury of the future shah Khumayun? From the burial-vault the diamond, of course, would go to the hands of this greedy old man. The white-bearded wants to own

the diamond of the young Khumayun; he knows that both Babur and Mohim-begin are ready to do anything to save their son.

Babur knew that sheyh-ul-islam had no special liking to Babur – he was gentle with Hindu-heathens! – and if Khumayun would die, sheyh-ul-islam and other mullas would be glad to slander that the shah had provoked Allah's wrath with his greediness.

– "Taksyr, tell me openly: what is more important – my life or the diamond Kohinur?"

– "Oh, master! Thousands of such diamonds aren't worth of even your little finger!"

– "All right. If it's so", – Babur raised his voice so that everybody could hear him, - "if it's so, then I'll sacrifice something more valuable than the diamond Kohinur. And let this sacrifice be taken not by God's slaves but God!"

Everybody looked at Babur with fear and perplexity, while he slowly came to the head of the bed on which unconscious Khumayun was lying.

– "My dear son, Khumayun! I address God," – Babur started, as if praying. – "Let him take away the illness which had stricken you and spike it into me, your father!"

Women, doctors, confessors, beks – everyone who was in the room, froze. Babur went round the bed of Humayun three times, proclaiming:

– "Oh, lord! I'm shah Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, give my life to my son. Admit my sacrifice, Allah! Let Azrail take my life and let god grant healing to Khumayun!"

Mohim-begin stopped crying, stared at her husband with fright and expectation. And the old sheyh-ul-islam stared at Babur too, as if Khumayun was to stand up from his bed, and Babur exhausted to fall on that bed.

But no miracle happened. Khumayun unconcsious murmured something and fell silent again.

Babur, having lowered his head, left the bedroom.

### III

The strong heart of the fellow finally overcame the illness, and in a week Khumayun got up from his bed. And the next day he went to see his father at his "shelter of solitude".

He saw his father's face – it was wrinkled with thinness, his eyes seemed to increase in their sizes, and he became crooked too early for his age.

– “I'm exhausted by insomnia”, – Babur said, having caught his son's look. – “Well and how do you feel?”

– “You saved me, master. After having come to consciousness, I keep praying for God not to take your sacrifice for me.”

– “My son, it was a symbolical sacrifice. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to set myself at ease, my conscience. Besides I wanted to redeem my fault in front of your mother.”

– “And mullas say that the death, which was appointed for me, will come to you.”

– “Do you really believe in it? Everybody is mortal, and each of us will die at his destined time. But on that most difficult time I saw that they want to use your illness for your and my damage. Sheyh-ul-islam wanted to rise above me. You have recovered yourself, but if things had gone the way he wanted, if I had given him Kohinur diamond, then he and other mullas would have triumphed: they have cured Khumayun, and they are stronger than the shah. I have overcome them, stopped intrigues with my word and with my sacrifice... We must be strong and flexible. Remember, son: mullas and sheyhs always aim to become higher than us. But there must not be any middlemen in the affairs between a man and the god. Listen to mullas and sheyhs but act independently. Remember, what Abdul Latif, the son of the great Ulugbek, had done under their influence.”

– “I remember, master... But you talk to me in such a way as if you have given the throne to me already, as you wrote in that letter. Believe me: it's enough for me to be your governor in Sambhal, father. They say that the situation is uneasy again there. Let me leave for there in two days again.”

Wishing to attract his son's attention to the following words, Babur kept silent for a while.

– “You must understand, Khumayun, my intention is serious. Soon you'll have to take the reins of government. I've been sick for the second year since Bayda tried to poison me. I want to spend the rest of my strength doing other things – not being busy with state problems. Go to Sambhal, go now. But when you settle the things there right, appoint Hindubek at your place and come back at once.”

Khumayun understood that he had to fulfill that father's will implicitly.

The season of rains stopped. There were no clouds in the sky, and during sleepless nights Babur went to the garden to look at the stars. Babur often had high temperature, especially at nights, and if he looked at the sky, when being in such condition, it seemed to him that everything was shaking and stars were spinning in a whirlwind.

As usual at certain daytime he received beks, different officials and, more often than usual, sheyh-ul-islam. They all were unusually polite and attentive with him, and he knew: people usually act that way with those who were doomed to die, because they all believed in god, and their belief was actually belief in miracle. They had no doubt that the god accepted the sacrifice which Babur had made for his son's healing. Khumayun recovered, and now an invisible sword of death was above his father, and it was ready to fall at any time..."

It was very unpleasant to see polite smiles and respectful bows from the people who expected his death. Babur tried to spend more time at Mohim-begim's place and at "shelter of solitude".

Mezon came, and Babur began to feel worse. He didn't have any abscess on his body, and no swelling could be felt. He had pains in his chest.

Doctors shrugged their shoulders, and took counsel among themselves all the time. They came to a conclusion that the master had bad blood; they said that poison had spoiled it. He had to continue taking medicines, which cleaned blood, and drink a lot of pomegranate juice.

Nothing helped. Babur was completely attenuate and kept losing his strength.

When Khumayun returned from Sambhal, his father lied in a white bed on a rising in the middle of a large room. His white-blue face, body – skin and bone – astonished everybody who used to know Babur being strong and being radiant with health previously.

Khumayun kneeled by the bed, and pressed his lips against the dehydrated father's hand.

Khanzoda-begim was sitting at the foot of the bed and was fanning Babur's face with a fan made of birds' feathers. Mohim-begim sat motionless by the legs of Babur.

– "What is wrong with you, father?!" – Khumayun was astonished – "It is...the sacrifice...sacrificed his life for mine."

Mohim-begin, not being able to say a word, began to cry silently.

Babur began to speak with difficulty – slowly, overcoming his short breath, but pronounced his words clearly and intelligently:

– “My son, it has nothing to do with you ... My disease... is in my blood.”

– “Father, give me an order... I’m ready to do anything for your healing!”

– “I doubt that I’ll recover completely... But you can relieve my pain...”

– “How? Just tell me!” – Khumayun tossed up.

– “Call the head vizier and others who are necessary. I’ll declare you the head of my state in front of them!”

– “But one moment of your life is more important for me.”

– “You must do it”, – Babur interrupted him with wheeze.

Khanzoda-begin adjusted her brother’s bed. He asked to put one more pillow under his head: it was more comfortable to talk being in a semisitting position.

Babur now was ready for the meeting.

Shah Khumayun, Mohim-begin and Khanzoda-begin spent all the next day at the bed of Babur.

– “Khumayun owes you much, master”, – Mohim-begin said when felt that pain released her husband for a while and he wanted to talk to them.

– “Let him return this debt to his children”, – Babur pronounced with spacing. – “Most of us...Amir Timur’s descendants...have died because of mutual enmity. Son killed father. Brother destroyed brother. Everybody became a victim of betrayal and meanness. There were different ones among us, they were better, but they have become victims of their generosity. Here, Khanzoda-begin. In Samarkand, she doomed herself to slavery in order to save me. She taught me to be self-denying. You, Khumayun, must teach your brothers and your future children to be self-denying and generous.”

Babur having turned his head, looked at a white silk screen which had been placed by the bed. Only then Khumayun noticed that there was someone else behind it.

– “Takhirbek” -, Babur said, - “bring me the book.”

Takhir came from behind the screen, he took a leather folder in niche in the wall; there was a newly bound manuscript.

– “You must remember that in the mountains by Kabul, son, you asked for the book of my life. Here, take it. Consider it being finished the best way I could.”

Khumayun recalled father’s words which he had said then: «When I finish my book, my life will come to an end too». He took “Baburname” with both hands, leaned his forehead to it, and kissed the cover. Tears began to come off his eyes, and Babur noticed that a large tear fell on a gilded binding.”

– “Please, remember. It must be read by your descendants too. Do not repeat my mistakes. Multiply my good actions. Order to send the copies of the book to Samarqand...Tashkent...Andijan... Don’t lose contact with our first motherland... Who knows, this book might unite India and Maverannahr one day.”

Babur left the book as a testament! Khanzoda-begim couldn’t control herself any more:

– “Baburdjan, I’m your elder sister... I’m five years older than you. If leaving this world, I must be the first one to leave! You must not, my lord, master! Baburdjan, my brother! Must not! Must not!”

Khanzoda-begim called him Baburdjan, and Babur was carried away to his childhood though for a moment, but he was carried away. The respectful “lord”, “majesty”, as beks, servants, his dear son, and even wife used to call him, became unbearable.

– “Khumayun, I haven’t heard the word “ata” from you for a long time.”

Khumayun really weaned from this simple word.

– “My father!” – He said. And he felt that it wasn’t what his father expected: – “Dad! Daddy!”

– “Goodbye, son ...”

Women began sobbing. Mavlyana Yusufi came in at this painful moment of Babur saying goodbye to his relatives.

Babur was dripping with sweat, breathing heavily and with wheeze.

– “My lord, you need to have a rest!” – The doctor said resolutely, and, having taken white gauze, began to wipe sweat from Babur’s face and neck. Then he gave a sign to Khanzoda and Mohim: leave, leave the room.

The women left silently. Babur whispered to Khumayun who leaned above him:

– “You go too, son... You have much work now.”

Khumayun embraced his father in silence, kissed his thin fingers and left too. Two hours later Babur ordered Takhir to call Fazliddin.

The architect approached the bed, trying not to look at the face of the dying.

– “My lord, I believe that deeds, which have been accomplished by you, will make memory about you immortal.”

– “Call me mavlyana too now. I’ve raised Khumayun to the throne.”

– “But you still have the throne of poetry, my lord. In Herat we used to call Alisher Navoi as “Hazrat Alisher”. And you are his follower – both in gathering talented people together, and in literature works in Turk. You made our language equal to Farsi and Arabic, and that’s what Mir Alisher dreamed of.”

– “Thank you...for your kind words, mavlyana. And you have built wonderful palaces and set paradisiacal gardens in Agra and Sikri. If god would prolong my life, I’d wish you to build a madrasah...Bibi-hanum madrasah in Samarcand – it is such a grand and magnificent building. My sister deserves one too...we, admiring, would have praised her name.”

Mavlyana Fazliddin saw that Babur was speaking with his last bit of strength. He began to speak himself: tempered and quickly:

– “Truly, this tradition – to praise names of women with wonderful buildings – has been peculiar to us for a long time. In Samarcand – Bibi-hanum madrasah, and Tuman-aka mausoleum, which was famous for the purity of the heart and angelic kindness. Hindu people also respect women very much, - there are females among deities whom they worship, and the main are the great Mahadevi in three serene hypostasis Parvati, Durga and Kama, and Lakshmi-Shri, the wife of Vishnu, whose double name means “presenting happiness”.”

– “Mavlyana, my sister Khanzoda-begim, you know, that severe times didn’t present her happiness...”, – Babur returned to his previous thought, - “she is a remarkable woman. If madrasah... you wish...predestined to build...call it “Khanzoda-begim madrasah”.

– “You have guessed my greatest and purest wish”, – Faliddin said simply. – “If my life won’t be long enough to accomplish it, I’ll leave it to my children when dying. Let them together with Hindu architects build a monument – it’ll represent our people’s admiration at the great heart of a woman!”

Babur was dripping with sweat. His white silk shirt turned dark and stuck to the body.

– “Uncle Mulla”, – Tokhir began to worry, - “the doctors ordered not to tire and worry the master.”

Fazliddin nodded, and leaned over to Babur’s hand. Babur moved his fingers showing a sign to come closer. He said whispering:

– “I have... one more request to you, mavlyana. There is a garden in Kabul...your garden. It is on the top of the mountain. I want my eternal solitude to be there. Splendor is not necessary, but there...a beautiful valley can be seen from the top.”

Fazliddin nearly began choking with tears. He didn’t say a word. He nodded and almost running left the room.

Takhir changed Babur’s clothes. He gently fulfilled his duties of a nurse. Whether there was necessity to give medicine or water, when Babur was thirsty, to wave with a fan, so that the sick could breathe easier, – Takhir did everything, not allowing anyone to come close to the bed. That night Babur was burning more than usual; Takhir called servants; they took the sick man with his bed to the yard.

There was a tender coolness in the air; such coolness was only in spring and in Andijan only. Stars were sparkling in the dark sky. They began to spin in an endless whirlwind, running against each other. It was a terrible sight. Having closed his eyes, Babur called Takhir:

– “Blood is getting cold...”

Takhir began squeezing muscles of shoulders, hands and legs faintly. Babur felt a little better, and he ventured to look up again.

Yes, the stars were motionless now, and sparkled quietly from the depth of the slate-black sky. Babur found Seven Brothers, still Golden Axis, and in the east – a joyful throng of Hulkar constellation.

– “Look there, in Kuva Hulkar rose just like it does here.”

Babur’s thoughts carried him to Andijan. They took him to his childhood.

The boy Zahiriddin once heard that Hulkar was a diamond snake which rose higher and higher with sky winds, and it waved with its diamond tail gaily, but it couldn’t fly very far, because it’s tied to the Golden Axis with an invisible thread. This tale for children sounded in his heart again. And his last consolation was that the sky and the stars in Agra remained the same as they were long time before, at the beginning of his life, in Andijan. He wanted to prolong that sweet

minute of return back to his childhood, but suddenly a severe spasm shook his infirm body, the starry sky began to spin in a whirlwind – and the whirlwind rushed on him and took somewhere far, into a dark abyss.

## EPILOGUE

By the end of his life Mavlyana Fazliddin managed to finish the burial-vault in Kabul, about which Babur told him before death, but he didn't have enough time to build madrasah in honor of Khanzoda-begim. His dream to immortalize the memory about the unusual woman probably was realized by great Hindu architects, by building the famous Tadj-Mahal in Agra, which was devoted to another woman – Mumtaz-begim, more than a hundred years later.

Having buried his uncle in Kabul, Takhir, following Khumayun's order, took the copies of "Baburname" to Samarqand, Tashkent and Andijan, where he presented them to worthy people. Last years of their lives Takhir and Robiya spent in Kuva. Their son together with sons of Mavlyana Fazliddin lived in Agra, they got married on native girls, and their descendants flew together with Hindu.

Ten years after Babur's death, Khumayun got married on a beauty Hamida Bana-begim, when their son was born, they called him Djalaliddin Akbar. By that time Mohim-begim had already died – cholera killed her. And Khanzoda-begim was still in good health, and she was bringing up the two-year-old Akbar. When kissing the boy, she repeated quite often: "Oh, Akbar – you are the very image of your grandfather! My brother Baburdjan looked like you at his two years! Not only face, but hands and legs – everything looks alike!"

Khanzoda-begim died at the age of sixty-eight near Kabul, when Akbar was three. She was buried in the burial-vault of Babur. And the ashes of Kutlut Nigor-hanum, their mother, had been moved there.

The further life of Khumayun was uneasy. His younger brothers born by another woman, Kamron and Askar, started a long war against him.

Endless wars took much strength and time from Khumayun, - he didn't manage to multiply the deeds of his father. Being a passionate bibliophile, he, however, enlarged his father's library in Delhi with rare manuscripts.

Being a warrior and participator of many severe battles, Humayun died not in the battlefield, but in father's library – he stumbled against a high marble step on the stairs, fell and hurt himself badly. Like his father, Khumayun died, not having reached the age of fifty. The grand mausoleum of Khumayun in Delhi had been built of red stone under the widow Hamida Banu-begim's will, who began to

govern the country with her fourteen year old son Akbar after the untimely death of her husband.

If you come to India, you'll definitely be shown the mausoleum of Mirza Khumayun in Delhi and Tadj-Mahal in Agra – they are the monuments of mutual love and loyalty.

There are many evidences that both Akbar and Shah-Djahan read "Baburname". They knew all the family legends concerned with Babur. Of course, these menacing rulers had their problems and difficulties, and life full of contradictions. But they also had a sense of the splendid things, like Babur had.

Maybe, when building Tadj-Mahal, Shah-Djahan tried not only to pay his debt to his untimely dead wife Mumtaz-begim, but also the debt of Babur to Khanzoda-begim and Mohim-begim, and Khumayun's debt to Hamida Banu-begim.

Among the descendants of Babur Akbar was the biggest connoisseur of creation. He took "Baburname" with him to campaigns. In Akbar's time two translations of "Baburname" were made from Turk into Persian language, the best painters of India drew great miniatures to the plot of the book.

For a long time different countries of the world only knew Babur as the founder of the empire of Great Moguls in North India, while his fictive heritage remained unknown to the majority.

But the empire of Great Moguls, no matter how famous it was at its golden age, having existed for about two centuries, irretrievably stayed in the past. And direct descendants of Babur didn't reach our age – the last of them died in the struggle against English colonizers.

Only one path remains, the one which leads us to poems and prose, written by Babur. As far back as in the last century "Baburname" was translated into Russian, English, French and German, the book found its connoisseurs in many countries of the world<sup>1</sup> (Though "The British Encyclopedia" (v.3) doesn't mention anything about Babur's creations on the columns dedicated to him. This publication completely avoids his books, which, by the way, have been known and paid high tributes by such enthusiasts from England, as E. Coldwell and A. Beveridge)

It's natural that Babur's works are especially valued on the land where he was born and grew up. Babur is studied in higher education institutes and schools as the largest poet-classic after Alisher Navoi.

Babur's monument was established at the Poets' Alley in Tashkent. His gazelles are still being sung on wedding parties.

The people of India also consider fictive heritage of Babur their cultural property. Djavaharlal Neru, the great son of Hindu people, having read Babur's memoirs, called him an enchanting individual and a typical representative of Renaissance in India. And the famous Hindu writer Mulk Radv Anand said about "Baburname": "This is one of the most wonderful books in the world. It's been decorated by miniatures of painters of India justly, as it is our common property".

This is the second life of the man of a great talent and amazing destiny, who left this world four and a half centuries ago.

PIRIMQUL QODIROV

STARRY NIGHTS  
BABUR

NOVEL

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ISBN 978-9943-51-92-6-8

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Guvohnoma №10-3512

Terishga berildi: 10.10.2018.  
Bosishga ruxsat etildi: 02.02.2019.  
Ofset qog'ozzi. Qog'oz bichimi: 60x84 1/16  
Cambria garniturasi. Ofset bosma.  
Hisob nashriyoti t.: 27,85. Shartli b.t.: 23,51.  
Adadi 50 nusxa. Buyurtma №33.

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SamDCHTI nashr-matbaa markazida chop etildi.  
140104, Samarqand, Bo'stomsaroy ko'chasi, 93-uy.