

Muso Toshmukhammad ogli

OYBEK

NAVOIY

NOVEL



*Memoirs from the life of the king
in the world of words*



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In this novel Oybek depicts Alisher Navoiy's way of life, social life and complicated political events of that time. He writes the following about creation of this novel in his autobiography: «The image of Navoiy showed itself in many classical poems of mine and, at last, I finished writing the novel "Navoiy" in 1942". This work has been published in 1944 after different kinds of discussions.

The novel is translated with the aim to provide a unique opportunity for the English speaking readers to get acquainted with the works of famous Uzbek writers and poets as well as for the students who are eager to enhance their understanding and knowledge by comprehending rare works of their ancestors. We hope that all the members of world community will have a chance to admire the cultural heritage of great statesman of Uzbek people.

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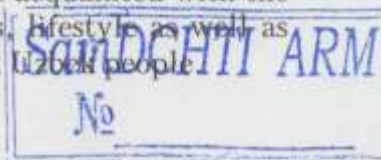
FOREWORD

Muso Toshmukhammad ogli Oybek (1905-1968) was one of the famous Uzbek poets and writers. Oybek was the most influential Uzbek writer of the XX century. His most famous works are "The Sacred Blood", "Revenge", "Navoiy", "The Great Route", "The Sun does not Darken", etc. His famous work "Navoiy" is translated directly from Uzbek into English for the first time.

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

Becoming Independent and promoting the integration of its culture into the world community, the Republic of Uzbekistan felt heavy need for more Uzbek translators with an excellent knowledge of foreign languages. Besides, nowadays great opportunities have been created for the direct translation from Uzbek into different foreign languages, particularly into English.

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



The main purpose is to introduce the precious work, pearls of Uzbek literature to the people of English speaking countries, as well as those who comprehend English as a whole.

The group of highly qualified translators from Uzbekistan State World Languages University together with the International Relations and Literary Translation Council of the Writers' Union of Uzbekistan has translated the book "Navoiy" by Oybek directly from original Uzbek into English.

The authors' group expresses its sincere gratitude to Christine Smart, 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 with your opinion at: ilhom_tuhtasinov@mail.ru

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CHAPTER I

The spring sun was shining in the blue sky over Gavharshod madrassah in Herat. The mosaics of the cupola were sparkling with the beams of the sun; the birds were flying and were playing around the cupola of the madrassah. There was a khanahak¹ on one side of the madrassah and the other three sides were surrounded by square hujras², and one could barely notice yesterday's rain vapor. Some of the students were sitting in the yard. They have been studying while sitting on the boyras³ on brick pavements. Some of them were studying "Qofiya"⁴, the others learning "Hoshiya"⁵ and the rest of them were engaged with "Shamsiya"⁶. Here one could also see one of them with his book on his knees learning by heart the book called "Arabiyot"⁷ with his eyes closed. In a corner, three students were sitting and arguing on some matter. One of them had a beard and was scrawny; he was trying to prove his ideas, refusing the others'. The other two who were younger than him but at the same time who were also as important as the first one were shouting at him and trying to prove their ideas. Sometimes they even forgot the main point of their argument and talked about other matters of the life, and after a while they would come back to the

¹ Interior chamber of a mosque

² Small study rooms in madrassahs

³ Cane mat or reed mat

⁴ "Rhyme", the book taught at madrassahs

⁵ The book taught at madrassahs

⁶ The book taught at madrassahs

⁷ The rules of the Arabic language



initial theme of their argument again. When they got into the argument deeper and deeper they would even cuss each other out and when they got angry they would look like eagles ready to attack its enemy. This situation was normal in the life of madrassahs so no one was paying any attention to it.

Even though the hujras looked like as if they were empty, there were four men in one of the shady areas talking about something. The hujra was narrow and wet. Even though the door was open and the sun was shining, it was dark inside. But certainly it was not the situation for this hujra only. The hujras in the madrassah could not be wide and pleasant as it would contradict the tradition. According to this, we can point out that the hujras in madrassahs all over the East were of the same type and condition... perhaps the builders took into the consideration the saying "Obtaining knowledge is like digging a well with a needle" and that might be why they chose such a style for the hujras in madrassahs...

Those four men were still talking in that half-dark and wet hujra. Three of them were students and the fourth one was the guest of this hujra's owner. Although there was a big difference in their level of knowledge, ages and characters they were the poorest ones in the madrassah, they gathered here and prepared dinner for themselves together. Today they have gathered here for the same purpose and they were discussing what to prepare for dinner. The oldest one among them, Aloiddin Mashhadiy, was the owner of the hujra. He had a dark black beard and eyebrows, his eyes were always half closed and he was a short man who was about forty years old. He had been working at "Gavharshod" for fifteen years and it was difficult for him to quit his job here. Although Aloiddin Mashhadiy had been taught by the leading teachers

of his time for many years he couldn't succeed in the field of study on his own. For the past several years, he had given up his studies and was not even attending classes. However, one happiness or maybe unhappiness of his time was poetry that had touched him. He composed poems in different styles. He could even compile a *divan*¹ in his sleepless nights; he considered himself as one of the best composers of the style called "muammas"². But his talent in this sphere was still unpopular with people as his *divan*. That's why he was worried about it very much. He couldn't take it anymore. The hopeless feelings didn't abandon him. The poet who looks for dignity and popularity usually composes poems honouring not only kings but vizirs, beks and even the people who are lower in rank. He honours the illiterate beks with the words like "The combination of knowledge", "The treasure of meanings", "The sponsor of poets and educated men". He can honour the beks with useless words but those words will seem very sparkling and meaningful to the beks. And he is very good at it. Aloiddin Mashhadiy is a nervous and sensitive man. He can start to hate a man for a very slight reason. If he gets angry with someone, he will write about him with such bad words that when a man reads it he will be able to notice the worst things about that man.

The second student is Zayniddin who comes from a middle class family in Herat. He is slim, talkative and about twenty or twenty one years old. He has been studying for four or five years and he has already managed to achieve considerable success in some subjects. He is good at Arabic and Persian languages. But because of his thoughtful character he does not pay much attention to his education. He spends much of

¹ Complete collection of poems

² A style of poem where poets hide the name of the main hero

his time on various arts. He is popular with the people in the madrassah as he has very good handwriting. He is brilliant at singing songs and can play the gijjak¹ very well. Recently his relations with his father worsened so he became poor. Thus, he started to visit parties organized by the rich and respected students of his madrassah and there he would both play his musical instrument and have a good meal there.

The third student was a guy from Shakhrisabz who came here to study. His name was Sul-tonmu-rod and he was eighteen years old with sharp and big eyes, a wide forehead and a small body. He has been studying here for two years. He comes from the family of the famous sculptor in Shakhrisabz. When his father died falling from the roof of a building in Samarkand, Sul-tonmu-rod was only three years old. He was brought up by his educated and workaholic mother, then first he studied in his hometown, afterwards he went on his study in Samarkand and at last he managed to come to Herat with the help of his relatives. So this way he came to this madrassah. His talent was well-known both among the people at the madrassah and some scientists of Herat. He does his best to acquire the knowledge and become a leading scholar of his time. Besides the religious subjects he studied mathematics, astronomy, logics, literature and others very deeply. When he was fourteen years old and used to study in Samarkand, one of his teachers told him the following: "Long ago there was a scientist who used to say that he would be able to reestablish the entire world of science and arts even if all the scientists and scholars forgot their subjects and knowledge. I can see the same talent in your eyes, my son. Do your best to achieve success in science!" Now Sul-tonmu-rod's purpose was to get to that peak of knowledge.

¹ A national musical instrument

Only Tugonbek who was Aloiddin Mashhadiy's guest seemed different there. He was from Samarkand. He was a stout man with a big body and reddish beard. He had a wide and dark face and his eyes looked very sly. Even though it was very hot he still had his old, ugly quilt and big, thick headwear on... Tugonbek's ancestors used to work at the highest positions during Amir Timur's reign. There were famous commanders, authorities and tarkhans¹ among his ancestors. But later on when Timur's state collapsed, a struggle for the throne began among the princes so the dignity of Tugonbek's family started to descend from that time. His father Feruzbek disappeared during one of his journeys. Then his honoured uncles lost the respect they used to have. Some of his cousins and brothers were killed during sultans' battles and some of his relatives moved to other places looking for their luck and because of being scared of their enemies. Tugonbek himself had gone deep into the hot spots of political struggles and continuous revolts in Maverannakhr², Khorasan, Dashti Kipchak, Iraq and all the places, as a whole, which used to be under Timur's reign. He did his best in finding his luck and glory. He served to Chagatai-Uzbek sultans and Turkmen beks but there he was both cheated and betrayed. At last he left for Herat two months ago. Even though he met Aloiddin Mashhadiy by chance, he became friends with him and moved into his hujra.

Although Tugonbek was an illiterate man, he understood well the value of science. He listened to the discussions and arguments of the students very attentively, but he thought that this was totally strange for him. Science was a suitable thing for meek and patient

¹ An honored man awarded special rights and exceptions by the emirs or kings

² Transoxiana



people, but Togonbek always thought about different journeys: he liked participating in battles on his strong horse and winning them, he preferred conquering castles together with his friends and getting his spoils. Togonbek lived with the feeling of conquering various states and cities and becoming a bek in a region and then attacking other cities and countries. After all he wanted to make a revolution in those cities and become a king or at least to find a prince who would not have any power and appoint him as king and to reign the country on his own.

He has struggled with these dreams. But whatever he did he could not manage to achieve his goals. On several occasions some people were about to find out about his ideas. And some people even wanted to kill him for that but he was able to get rid of them and managed to settle into this hujra of the madrassah. But Togonbek has not given up his will yet. He believed in his goal: there were many of Timur's grandsons here and they get more and more day by day. Making a revolt against each other among relatives and cousins has become a usual case in this country. Besides, there were many beks and khakims¹ in cities and towns who always had great desire to obtain dignity, glory and honour. That's why Togonbek understood that such kind of conflicts would go on for a long time so he would just wait for the right time and situation...

Students who lived on the money from vaqf² were in a difficult situation now. They had already spent all their money during the cold winter and now were facing the problem to get something to eat for dinner once or twice a week. There was nothing to sell and make money. When they talked about dinner Togonbek would say: "We will, for sure, find a way out, it

¹ Mayors of cities

² A type of tax in medieval times

must not be a problem in such a big city as Herat!" and then he would go out and find ingredients to cook a meal.

His roommates knew that he did not have a penny in his pocket, but nevertheless they never asked him how he found money for the staff. But today, even though the conversation about dinner have continued for hours, Togonbek said nothing. He just sat in a corner of the hujra staring at one point for a long time as if he was feeling bad.

They all heated the oil and fried meat. In some hujras delicious meals were prepared even twice a day. The owners of those hujras did not depend on the incomes from vaqf. They came from rich families. In the evenings they talked about interesting events. They gathered together with their friends and drunk alcohol, listened to music and watched dances; in short, they had a good time...

After a long discussion, they could not find any solution and then Aloiddin Mashhadiy who was sitting on the top of the room moved and shook his head. Then he sighed deeply and complained about life and read the following lines loudly:

*It is a world which betrays you
Gives wealth to the villains
And laughs at the poor.*

Then Zayniddin suggested which had always given very good results i.e. he said that they were supposed to write an ode about one of the old princes, honoured men of the city. Even though all others liked the idea Aloiddin did not approve it, because he thought that it was him only to do so and he did not want others to interfere with it. Who knows, maybe, Mashhadiy will write a very good ode and the prince could offer him



very expensive clothes, some money and some sheep and that's why he did not want to share anything with others. Unfortunately Mashhadiy has never been praised like this yet, but he always believed in his talent and that's why he always had a thought like this...

Zayniddin wanted to appease Aloiddin so he got serious and said the following:

– If I were a poet of ode I would write an ode to Sultan Husayn Boyqaro and would get royal clothes and praises, because two weeks ago he was appointed as a king and he calmed down a lot. I am completely sure that he will praise and respect poets now.

– They say that the Sultan himself is a very talented poet as well, – said Sul-tonmu-rod, – it turns out he can write very beautiful poems. And I have no doubt that he will esteem the work of poets because he himself is a great enthusiast of beauty and poems.

Even though Aloiddin tried to pretend not to pay attention to these words, actually he was worried about it very much. He took Zayniddin's words as sarcasm. In response to Zayniddin's words he said: "The new king himself is a great poet and he is interested in beauty of words very much, so don't dare to write an ode to him!", having said these words he said nothing more and looked down keeping a long silence.

Togonbek who has still been sitting with his serious face started to talk:

– Do you want to take something to eat from the king now? You've better pray for Allah instead... the kings have their own problems such as feeding their warriors and build castles, let alone care about yourselves. Kings think more about journeys and wars rather than madrassahs.

– They say that Husain Boyqaro is both a poet and a scientist and we can expect good deeds from him, – said Zayniddin with a great confidence.

– “The people of Khorasan are now thirsty for fairness and justice as a desert which needs water. Perhaps, our hopes will come true”, – said Sul-tonmu-rod stretching his hands.

Togonbek touched his mustache with his thick fingers and smiled with sarcasm.

Aloiddin Mashhadiy completely closed his eyes as he always did when he was angry with someone or something.

An old servant Hoki Solih came into the hujra. He was a thoughtful and a little bit silly man.

– Hey, you, the men who gained much knowledge without reading a single book, aren’t you here? – he said to Sul-tonmu-rod and went on smiling. – Recently I have been to Chorsu and one of your friends who sells halvah told me that he wanted to invite you and mullah Zayniddin to his house. Perhaps he will read for you one of his new poems or maybe something else.

Sul-tonmu-rod became very happy and turned to Zayniddin.

– We will certainly go, – said Zayniddin standing up, – and we will have a good time there by making a pleasant conversation.


– What a wonderful city Herat! – said Togonbek shaking his head. – Both the halvah seller and the cook are poets. You should go there, his poems might not have taste but his halvah will taste, I am sure.

– The halvah seller mavlono¹ Turabiy is an educated man, – said Zayniddin with anger. – We can take you with us and you will appreciate his knowledge on your own there.

Togonbek smiled as a sign of agreement. Aloiddin Mashhadiy slowly opened his eyes and turned his face back.

¹ Title of respect, especial among religious people (*Mr.*)





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They left the madrassah having finished the afternoon prayer. Two students were dressed in clean, long and wide oriental robes and they had white turbans on their heads. They were walking with special pride as it was a tradition for the students of madrassahs, but beside them Togonbek was accompanying them who was dressed in poor and dirty clothes which did not fit him at all. As usual, Zayniddin told his companions that he was supposed to call at some places for a short period of time and asked them to follow him. But Togonbek did not like it and complained about it, Sul-tonmu rod smiled meaningfully. One would always get exhausted if he was accompanied by Zayniddin, because Zayniddin would always meet his friends, companions and close people in every corner of the street. Zayniddin would always talk to them and for instance, one of them would tell him an incident which had happened in Herat lately and another one would joke with him and the others would argue with him... He would listen to new ghazals¹ and verses or odes by a poet, or he would listen to a new music by a composer; and he would talk to the street guys of Herat in their language, then he would make jokes about the butcher's fat belly, about the broken scales of the greedy grocer and baker's bread... So one would ever guess how he got across the city; for instance, from the Gate Mulk to the Gate Feruzobod.

Sultonmu rod held Togonbek's arms who was willing to get rid of them and followed his friend with joy and happiness. He was very interested in walking along the city under a beautiful sky and weather because he had been reading books in the wet and narrow hujra of the madrassah for a week already.

¹ Type of poem

It was spring in Herat. The sun was shining in the squares, in green gardens, in overcrowded places and in the streets with one-store old and new houses.

Zayniddin went on making different jokes. Sometimes he would leave his friends for a while to talk to his friends he met at the corners of the streets and then he would continue his jokes and stories. Sul-tonmurod was listening to his friend's stories and enjoying the pleasant view of spring in Herat. He loved Herat very much. There were many great madrassahs, tall towers and mosques, rich palaces decorated with the best patterns of art, beautiful houses and mausoleums of great and sacred people in this large city surrounded by high walls. Sul-tonmurod always enjoyed coming to these places alone again and again. He became interested in the history of this city and started to collect information about its old buildings, squares, markets and bridges from ancient manuscripts, myths and other sources. The sources said that this city had been built by Iskandar Zulqarnayn¹. He managed to gather dozens of verses and poems about the ancient buildings and Herat itself. All the poems gave the same idea about the greatness, beauty and importance of Herat:

*Herat is the eye and lantern of
all the cities in the world,
If the world is like a body,
Herat is the soul of the world.*

The people of Herat were proud of it and liked to compare its soil to gold and its gardens to paradise and its water to the water of heaven. All travelers from Samarkand, Baghdad, Egypt, India and China liked this city very much as well.

¹ Alexander the Great



Zayniddin stopped and started to talk to a famous carver of Herat. This place was a hill and an attractive building of the city called Qal'ai Ikhtiyoriddin could be seen from here. It was the castle which was surrounded by high walls like mountains. Togonbek, who had participated in many battles and seen lots of great castles, stared at the castle screwing up his eyes. He told Sul-tonmu-rod very interesting facts about the features of the castle. Then they spoke about the basin which was between the Gate Mulk and the Gate Kipchak situated far in the South of the city. Zayniddin came back. He looked at the big bazaar, crowded with lots of people, situated below the hill. One could see beks on their horses dressed in expensive oriental robes decorated with gilded ornaments, the rich dressed in Chinese silk robes and shoes, peasants on donkeys, craftsmen, rude officers punishing a criminal, warriors and thoughtful, indifferent dervishes dressed in poor robes at the corner of the crossroad. There were more beggars here than in the other parts of the city. Zayniddin nudged Sul-tonmu-rod's elbow.

That tall guy is Haydar polvon¹, - he said pointing at a man. He was beaten by Mufrid qalandar² from Iraq and his legs were broken. The surgeon Sheikh Husayn healed his legs in forty days digging his legs into soil. Do you see that the drunken man walking proudly? He is the grandson of a poet who has written five hundred verses during his life. He is also a poet, but he makes people who listen to his poems pay some money for it. That man with a goatee next to the grocer is Master Orif Bukhoriy... He is brilliant at carving, jewelry, hairdressing, chemistry, coverings and other stuff, in short, he is a rare man. That man on the horse is the cousin of city governor.

¹ Wrestler, strong man

² Hermit, wandering dervish

His name is Shodi bedod. Do approach him when you shave your mustache and beard!

Sultonmurod and Togonbek laughed loudly, then they went down and joined the people there. After a short walk, they came to the main arch of the garden called Zogon. This was the king's palace and there were more beks, authorities, armed officers than usual at the gate of the palace.

– Either the king is about to leave for somewhere or an ambassador is supposed to arrive, – said Zayniddin.

– Something is going on, people are worried about something... – said Togonbek with his envious eyes.

– Shall we wait? – asked Zayniddin and looked at Sultonmurod. – Let's go! I am very exhausted, – insisted Sultonmurod.

When they approached Chorsu, the overcrowded and noisy market, Togonbek stopped suddenly. He did not listen to his companions, left them and disappeared in the crowd of people in the market.

– He did not want to listen to advice, said Sultonmurod smiling.

– Not at all, – said Zayniddin shaking his hand. He may find and give some grant-in-aid to poor, Aloidin. Poet Turabiy is almost 40 years old, a modest man. He met his friends joyfully. They seemed not to have seen each other for a long time. After some words he invited them to the living room.

Zayniddin opened the door and pleasant light entered the room together with spring coolness. The room was decorated beautifully. It was a reception at the same time. Some scientists and poets from Herat often meet here with each other and Arabic, Turkish books are read by them and different issues are discussed.

All books in the bookshelf were read and they looked for some new ones and sat at the door. After a while a poet came to the room with fresh bread and

candies. Students ate them all very quickly and made compliments about the candies prepared by the poet. They asked the poet to recite poems.

– Joyful poems have not been written yet, - said the poet. I just wanted to enjoy your conversation.

– “We want you to recite something” - said Sul-tonmu rod politely. We haven't heard anything for a week.

The poet stood up slowly. He took a big book from the bookshelf and opened it, then he took a sheet of paper and passed it to Zayniddin. He looked through it one by one and put it on Sul-tonmu rod's knee.

– It is a fact that there is nobody who can recite a poem as you in the world. You are welcome.

Sul-tonmu rod is used to reciting poems. When he recites poems everything seems to be beautiful and bright. He began to recite the poem. Zayniddin was enjoying by listening to such a melody and shaking his hand slowly. When he stopped reciting, everybody expressed their positive comments and discussed the components of the poem.

Sul-tonmu rod mentioned only one sophisticated poem and he compared some hemistiches of the poem with the contemporary poets such as Sheraziy and Jamiy. Then he began to recite the poems of ten different poets and gave his opinion on those poems. At the end, Sul-tonmu rod stopped the discussion when the poet went to the shop to see his nephew. Anyway, the discussion kept going and Zayniddin spoke about the works of new and old poets of Herat. Then he continued telling funny stories. When he told one of the funniest stories about Jamiy and Sogariy¹ Sul-tonmu rod laughed loudly. He tried to stop himself and said: “That's enough!” while he was controlling himself, the poet Turabiy entered.

¹ Abdurakhman Jamiy (1414–1492) – a famous poet. One of Navoiy's friends; Sogariy is a poet of XV century.

- If I am not mistaken, you were going to the shop. Where have you been? - said Zayniddin.

- Unfortunately, you were absent, - said Sultonmurod. - You missed the funny stories of Zayniddin.

- I have brought information about a person whose words are brilliant - said Turabiy.

- Well? - two students looked at him.

- Alisher Navoiy has returned to the city.

- Really?

- Of course, everybody is speaking about it.

- We should meet with him, - Sultonmurod stood up.

- We haven't been informed, he has arrived his home, - said the poet and continued: - Zayniddin, have you ever talked with Alisher?

- I don't know, but he has come to madrasah several times. He was close with our teachers.

- As butterflies love flowers that man also was interested in science, poetry and art from his childhood, - said the poet.

- I have never seen Alisher, - said Sadulla with excitement, - but as soon as he came to Herat I have heard many good words about that famous man of the world. He writes beautiful poems. Please, tell me about his life in detail, because I have heard a lot about his good qualities, but nothing about his life...

Poet Turabiy was thoughtful for a while and then he began to speak:

In spite of little connection between us, like all people living in Herat, I know a little about the life of that man. Alisher was born in a respectful and noble family. His grandfather and father served to Timur...

His father, who appreciated science and education, was a khakim of Sabzavor¹ and he brought his child up well. Alisher was capable in all spheres of science as well. One more thing is that, Alisher and Sultan

¹ A small city in Khorasan



Husain Boyqaro were friends and schoolmates from their childhood.

– We know, Alisher wrote poems from an early age and he is famous as a bilingual poet. When he was serving to Abulkhosim Babur he was 15 years old. At that moment his works written in Uzbek and Persian were wide-spread among people. He wrote Persian poems under the pen name “Phaniy”, and for the Turkish poems he used the pen name “Navoiy”. I remember, all outstanding poets of Herat discussed his poems.

– Mavlano Lutfiyy was ready to exchange his whole works to Alisher Navoiy’s poem of two lines – said Sul-tonmu-rod.

– Obviously, it is right. Poet Lutfiyy spoke about Navoiy’s talent in writing poems several times, – said poet Turabiy. – Indeed, Navoiy created the most important peculiarities of our mother language. You may ask from your teachers and scientists of our period about Alisher’s talent and knowledge. He studied in Herat and Mashhad for many years.

According to Fasikhiddin’s words, Alisher is acquainted with every science such as philosophy, logic, archery and music, – said Sul-tonmu-rod.

Alisher Navoiy is a skillful calligrapher. He has great talent in music. He considers it as people’s weakness if they are not familiar with music, – said Zayniddin.

– Exactly, poets should know the music and melody of the words, – said Sul-tonmu-rod, – well, has Navoiy visited Samarkand officially?

– Only for education, – said Turabiy.

– For education? – asked Sul-tonmu-rod and added. – Samarkand was a treasure of knowledge in the period of Ulughbek. Now it has changed. All scientists moved to Herat from Samarkand.

– To my mind all information about this is not true,
– said Zayniddin to Turabiy.

Listen to me, I will prove it to you, said Turabiy,
– my friends who come from Samarkand or others who
have gone there on their business have told me about
Navoiy several times. He takes lessons regularly from a
famous lawyer Khodja Fazlullo Abullays. They are very
close to each other. The hakim of Samarkand and poet
Akhmad Khojibek and Alisher were close friends too.

– Well, if they ask Alisher about himself, he may
answer the same to you. We can even trust that he was
taught by Khodja Fazlullo Abullays, but this is just
the surface of the matter.

– What is the truth in that case? – asked mavlono
Turabiy.

– According to some very truthful people's words,
Alisher had very bad relations with the dead king
Abusaid mirzo. Abusaid mirzo did not want Alisher to
live in Herat. That is why Alisher had to leave Herat
for Samarkand three years ago. In addition, the real
reason of conflict between the king and Alisher is, of
course, some political views. Wait a little, my friend,
I will tell you a story: everybody knows that the for-
mer king's enemy was king Boyqaro and Alisher was
Boyqaro's close friend. Besides, Alisher's uncles were
Husayin Boyqaro's close people and they helped him
to fight for the throne. These reasons made Abusaid
mirzo hesitate Alisher, didn't they?

Mavlono Turabiy did not mind. Frankly, he could
not find any reason to disagree with him, so he just
kept silent and looked down. Sul-tonmurod, who had
been listening to this argument between them atten-
tively, said the following:

– I guess Zayniddin's words are more meaningful
than the others are. My friend Zayniddin may make



mistakes while praying five times a day but he will never make a mistake about the events of Herat.

Everybody laughed. At that very moment, new guests came in and most of them were poets. Everybody was talking only about Alisher!

II

Togonbek wandered in the market for a long time. The smells of bread being baked in the bakeries and various meals were so yummy that he hardly could manage to stay away of them. He was very hungry, but unfortunately, he had nothing in his pocket.

Five years ago, when he first came to this city he had only twenty-five dinars¹ in his pocket. He spent that money very economically and used them for some time. Now he had nothing in his pocket; he even borrowed some money from butchers and bakers and he had only a knife made of elephant's teeth and silver to sell. However, Togonbek did not want to sell it for two reasons even though he was about to die of hunger. First, he liked knives very much. As is known, some people believe in prays, some believe in various totems and Togonbek believed in the sacred power of knives. Secondly, it was inherited from his ancestors. This knife was his grandparents' lucky companion! Togonbek did not look for any job to earn some money. He did not like working. He thought that any kind of job would humiliate his pride and respect. But he did not consider wandering along the snowy storms and in the mountains and in the hot Asian desert to do hard work. He even could wander and ride a horse in those places for weeks without having anything to eat.

Togonbek walked along the rows of the Herat market and looked at the shops filled with goods from

¹ A dinar is equal to about fifty cents

India, Iran, China and Egypt. He started to envy having seen handsome beks on their powerful horses. Towards the evening, he stopped at an old man's shop who sold various arms. The strong and short old man greeted him warmly:

– What can I do for you, my son?

Togonbek said nothing. He took his knife off his wrist and handed to the old man.

– Old chap, help me. I will never forget your good deed as long as I am alive. I will remember you as my own father.

The old man was good at his job. He was brilliant at choosing the steel. He could find out not only the quality of the steel but also he could tell where it had been made whether in Baghdad, Isfahan or Samarkand at once.

The old man stared at the knife for a while and then his eyes sparkled with happiness. Then in order to buy the knife at a lower price talked to Togonbek with patience and calm:

– My son, I am a seller. I always look for people who appreciate such kind of things, but if you are in a very difficult situation I am ready to help you, because I have never built any mosques or madrassahs. I have not built any mausoleums for holy people and I have never been to Mecca for pilgrimage. Therefore, I have not done any good deeds in my life.

– Old chap, – said Togonbek touching his chin, – I am not going to sell it.

– Well, what do you want then? – asked the old man.

– I want you to keep it as a pledge, – answered Togonbek sitting at the edge of the shop. – You will lend me five dinars; I will bring you six dinars in a month and get my knife back. If I cannot bring you your money back in that case you will buy it. You yourself will set a price for it then...



The old man kept silent for some minutes. Then he said:

– You have put me into a very difficult situation, what should I do?

– I have come to you as I have nothing to eat, – said Togonbek in a begging voice. – When I was a baby my late father used to put this knife under my pillow. And I have been carrying it since I grew up.

– Oh, my son, I know. This steel has been saving you from different bad luck and it has always been one of the rare thoughts for you. That's why it is very sacred for you, but don't think that I will show it to every buyer. I will give it to a guy who also likes knives as you do. He appreciates a good knife more than his wife and he comes from barlos dynasty!

Togonbek was in hopeless situation. He asked him to give his knife back, but the old man did not want to lose such a valuable thing. He hoped perhaps he would buy it at a very low price a month later and put his hand into his pocket and said:

– All right, my son, I do want to help you.

Togonbek took five dinars, put them into his pocket and left. Even though he had money to buy something to eat he was very sorry and unhappy to leave his knife. The thoughts whether he will be able to get the knife back were hurting him very much. He roamed for some time again. Then he entered a canteen and later in the evening he went to the madrassah. He entered the pub located along the large street leading to the Feruzobod Gate of Herat. He asked the owner of the pub, who was short and fat, sitting behind the jug of different sizes to give him *obi angur*¹ and then he sat down in the corner of the room. There were many people here. Some of them were sitting alone and having alcohol thoughtfully. Some of them were with

¹ Type of alcohol

their friends and drinking and laughing loudly. There were some old people talking to each other in the other corner of the room. One of them was reading a Persian poem with his weak voice. And the others were shaking their heads under the melody of the poem. A group of hooligans of the city were drinking alcohol as if they were competing with each other. A poet who was really drunk was boasting.

Togonbek did not even feel the two cups of the obiangur because he used to drink alcohol very often as Kazakhs drink qimiz all the time. Usually he would spend much money on alcohol, but for the very first time in his life he had to break his rule. He stopped to continue drinking even though it was very hard for him. He stood up as he did not want to waste his entire money taken instead of his valuable knife, but at the exit someone shouted to him: Togon! A son of bitch!

Togonbek turned around and saw Toqli mergan¹ who was sitting among the old men. Even though Togonbek was very happy to see him he greeted him very proudly and calmly and then he sat beside him. Togonbek used to serve for the khakim of Badakhshan with this brave guy.

Toqli mergan also greeted him proudly and smiled: "So, drink it as you used to do before!" – he said and gave the cup to Togonbek and asked for another cup of alcohol for himself. They drank the alcohol and then started to ask about each other. Togonbek told him about his adventures and his present life. Toqli mergan told him that he had come back from Iraq a week earlier and was serving at Ikhtiyoriddin Castle. He considered Togonbek an intelligent and wise person, so he was very sorry for him.

– The bird of luck will someday come to you, until that time whatever you do will not help you; – he said

¹ A man good at shooting, sniper



bending toward his friend. – I know that you can become a commander of huge troops. But keep it in your mind, don't hurry: now just think about enjoying the life!

– What should I do? – said Togonbek, – should I become a sufi to a mosque or a student of craftsman?

I know a very good man here. He is somehow my relative. You know, I come from Herat. He is a very good man and he is very esteemed in the government. Yesterday I met him and he told me to find a brave and reliable guy to serve him. I had also been hired to the castle with his efforts. If you want, we can meet him right now.

Togonbek drank the alcohol up to the end and cleaned his face with his sleeves and started to think, biting his thick mustache.

– I know you; your pride does not allow you! – said Toqli mergan. – That's very bad. You will live in his house with pride and be honoured. Have you got it?

Togonbek stared at his friend. He saw that his friend was talking sincerely, so he agreed. They had another cup of alcohol and then they left the pub.

They were met by an old man at the gate. Togonbek stared at the old man attentively and understood that he was a slave. The old man invited them inside warmly and then he disappeared somewhere. After a short period of time a door opened and an old man's voice was heard:

– Please, come in!

Togonbek followed his friend and having entered the room he saw a middle aged, sly eyed, proud, nervous, selfish man sitting at the top of the room. He was Majididdin Muhammad – the son of Giyosiddin Pir Ahmad Havofiy who used to occupy the highest positions at Shokhrub's government. He was one of the small authorities during Abusaid mirzo's reign

and now he was the vizier of Muhammad Sulton who was Husain Boyqaro's nephew.

Togonbek greeted him and shook his hand. Toqli mergan sat down. Majididdin put the candle aside and stared at Togonbek and his clothes: he was a tall and brave guy and Toqli mergan was meek. Majididdin looked at Toqli mergan meaningfully and spoke very intentionally: "You believed in my words yesterday and kept me in your mind, huh? Do you know this guy very well? He looks like a very intelligent and clever guy. What shall we do? I have nothing to do but hire him."

When Toqli mergan started to talk about Togonbek's good features Togonbek interrupted him. He did not like Majididdin's treatment and words, so he was very serious now. Maybe Majididdin noticed it so he changed his voice and tone and said immediately:

- If it is possible, please, serve me. You will never be sorry about it.

- What shall I do? - asked Togonbek seriously.

- Ha, ha, ha, - laughed Majididdin. - be sure I will order you only those things which only true guys can do. If you serve well you will be appreciated and you will get promotion ...

- You will have anything to eat and anything to dress up, - Toqli mergan interfered... I know, isn't it, sir?

Majididdin smiled and nodded. Togonbek also felt better and asked to let him come in the morning and then he left with his friend.



CHAPTER II

I

When Sul-tonmurod came into mavlono Fasihiddin's hujra for the lesson, he was shocked. His master, dressed in a blue robe, was preparing a new turban. His usual meek, calm and pleasant face and his tall body were giving a sign that he was in a great hurry and happy. Sul-tonmurod thought that he was about to leave for some very great place. The teacher having finished his preparation of the turban first slowly touched it and then he faced Sul-tonmurod with a smile:

- Makh-dum, you may have a rest today. Today Alisher Navoiy has been appointed to the position of Secretary by the king. I taught Alisher for some time in his childhood and I must congratulate him on this event. Even though Sul-tonmurod knew that Alisher Navoiy was the king's close friend he could not imagine that he would be appointed to this position as soon as he got to Herat. He was very happy to hear this news as he had known this great man as poet through his poems and he had heard about his scientific activity and humanity from all the people of Herat. Then he heard that Alisher had come back to Herat in the entrance of halvah seller and at that very moment he started to dream of meeting this great man and now this dream was getting stronger and stronger.

- Sir, it means that I can congratulate you too, - said Sul-tonmurod with respect, because Mr. Alisher Navoiy was taught by you as well.

Mavlono Fasihiddin got very happy.

- I would like to tell you about one of my dreams, my teacher, - said Sul-tonmurod.

- What kind of dream is that? - started Fasihiddin seriously.

– The point is that what if I also go with you to meet the great poet? What would you say?–Sultonmurod replied.

Mavlono Fasihiddin looked down and kept silent, and Sultonmurod was sorry that he had caused a trouble for him.

Fasihiddin liked his extraordinary talented student and he always said good words about him. But he always had to get into trouble for this young man. He would look through tons of books in order to teach Sultonmurod for two hours. He could not dare to object to him. He looked at him suddenly and smiled.

– It is high time you talk to the great men of Khorasan. All right, you may go with me.

The teacher and student left the madrassah.

There was a great party at Alisher's place.

The servants led them into the large room at the top of the yard. There were some people in the room which was decorated with red carpets, mosaics on its ceilings and plaster decorations of the niche. Mavlono Fasihiddin was asked to sit at the top of the room and Sultonmurod sat at the entrance of the room. Most of the people gathered here were familiar to Sultonmurod and they were famous among people for their scientific work in various spheres of science. Some of them were the leading poets of Herat. Besides them, some of the great authorities were sitting proudly dressed up in expensive clothes, and one could notice that they were astonished by the poorly dressed poets. Sultonmurod understood that Alisher was still in the palace from the words of the people. He listened to their noisy conversations. After some time somebody informed them that the poet had come. Sultonmurod went to the terrace immediately. At that time most of the people went to the terrace as well as Mavlono Fasihiddin. Everybody was looking at the yard with



lots of trees. Sul-tonmu-rod recognized the poet immediately, among several people coming from the palace dressed in gilded robes, as if he had met him before. He got very happy. The poet had a very beautiful turban on his head and he had on a very simple robe. Even though Navoiy was about thirty he looked like a middle aged man. He was a little bit taller than medium height but very strong, he had long fingers and thin, dark black and short beard on a smooth face; his cheeks were a little bit out and there was a sign of his smartness, power of spirituality and kind of attractive wrinkles on his face. Besides, one could notice a kind of willpower under his eyelid.

Navoiy started to greet the people with smiles on their faces. Having greeted and congratulated Navoiy, Mav-lono Fasihiddin pointed to Sul-tonmu-rod. Sul-tonmu-rod got a little pale with excitement. He put his hand on his breast and came up to the poet. He bent a little and then shook his hand and took a step backward.

— He is one of my students, — said Fasihiddin proudly. — He has got a rare talent. I am completely sure that he can become Abu Ali ibn Sino of our time.

— My esteemed teacher made a great hyperbole about me, — said Sul-tonmu-rod with a smile. Navoiy warmly asked Sul-tonmu-rod where he was from and which subjects he had learnt so far and with a friendly smile. Sul-tonmu-rod said the truth. He told him which subjects he had studied in detail with modesty. At that time some of other teachers also expressed their opinion about Sul-tonmu-rod who knew him well.

— Do not stop working like this, — said Navoiy happily. — Our nation needs such kind of people like you. We must plant the tree of knowledge in our country and then get a very rich harvest. And now we have become friends. I hope that you will always remember and visit us.

– I express you my deep gratitude for your kindness, – said Sul-tonmu-rod in trembling voice. – I cannot imagine a greater happiness but learning and listening to you.

Navoiy entered the room with Sul-tonmu-rod and although Navoiy asked Sul-tonmu-rod to sit at the top of the room he apologized and sat at the bottom of the room. Some of the people, who did not understand Navoiy's soul, were surprised. They were thinking why Navoiy was paying so much attention to a student who was so simply dressed and young. Sul-tonmu-rod felt this and he started to appreciate Navoiy even more than he did before. Navoiy sat at the bottom of the room, maybe, because he was the host. First he started to talk about the situations and conditions at the madrasahs and living conditions of teachers and students there and also asked about the tax called vaqf in Herat. He listened to the people's words very attentively. Then he tried to get more information about various scientific works, divans which appeared for the past years in Khorasan. Navoiy even tried to find out more information about any unknown poet who had written a poem or a ghazal. The party was very interesting and everybody was enjoying.

Sul-tonmu-rod was staring at Navoiy continuously as if he knew that he would never see him again. He could feel modesty, pride and greatness, and his manners were without any conceit. Navoiy's voice sounded meek, pleasant and beautiful to Sul-tonmu-rod.

The servants prepared the table and meals. Various sweets, almonds, fruits were served for the guests, then soup and lots of meat and bread were served.

After the party the oldest man among them said amen and everybody said good bye to the newly appointed secretary.



The light of the candle on the niche and the beam coming in through the open door were glittering on the flowers of the carpet; the wind blowing from time to time was playing with the light of the candle and making the wide open book on a low chair murmur, and then the wind would stop as if it was quietly listening to the miracle of the music played by a poet on the tanbur¹... Navoiy was fond of both music and poems equally; he knew and liked the science of music very much. The poet was playing the tanbur with great interest and it was touching the secret sound of the soul very beautifully.

The poet put the tanbur aside with a light tiresome look and then he took off the nohun. He sat at the door. There was not any sound in the yard except the one from the leaves of the trees playing with the wind. The poet started to think. He is here again in Herat, he is at home again. Perhaps, he will stay in this lovely city forever... who knows, maybe, the irony of destiny will make some other jokes with him!

Everything in this city seemed very familiar to him and everything looked friendly to him. It did not seem like this before. Perhaps, his last parent's spirit and love had been left on his things. In the past Navoiy's father Giyosiddin kichkina would caress him at this very door. And when he was four (the poet can hardly remember) he would retell Mirzo Qosim Anvoriy²'s lines by heart to his father and his father would get very happy. His father was a very good man. He was a simple, gentle and honest man, and so was his last mother! He could never compare his mother's love to him with the love of other mothers to their children.

¹ A musical instrument

² One of the most famous poets of that time



She was a very ordinary woman who would always be honest and polite with neighbors and her children. When Alisher would come back from school after his lessons she would hug him and give him bread, milk and sweets when he was five or six years old. She would get very happy listening to her son retelling the subjects taught at school by heart and she wanted her son to become a great mullah.

Then he started to think and recall political disorder that started in Khorasan after Shokhruh mirzo's death and how they had to leave for Iraq together with many other families; the difficulties, adventures and happiness on their way to Iraq, the meeting with Sharafiddin Yazdiy and, especially, he recalled when he got lost falling off a horse at night. When he woke up in the morning he was lying in the limitless desert and how he found a gentle horse and tried to find the way out and then how happy his parents were when he found them. When he used to study at school with Husain Boyqaro he learned by heart "Mantuqut-tayr"¹ by Farididdin Attor and he used to read this book again and again and he even stopped eating, playing with children and having a rest, so, his parents had to hide the book, but he would repeat it by heart...- as he continued to recall such kind of sweet and bad memories he sighed to loosen his strange feelings stuck in his breast. Then he remembered his first poem and the difficulties of poetry for the very first time. He just could not forget how his father was proud of his poet son who was also fond of science and art and then he gave him the pen names "Navoiy" and "Foniy", and it was impossible to forget the meeting with old mavlono Lutfiyy and his appreciation and great appreciation to Alisher. These thoughts and times had already been saved in Alisher's memories as if curved in his brain.

¹ "The language of a bird"



He recalled his years of poverty and time away from his motherland, his life in Mashhad for seven or eight years – the shabby hujras, reading books in the cold, narrow hujras of madrassahs without going out and sleepless nights. Through the books he would talk to ancient philosophers, scientists, poets who lived a thousand years ago. Then he recalled all his teachers, partners and wise people and his last teacher Khodja Fazlullo Abullays who was from Samarkand. He was pleased with all of them. Then he started to talk to them through his imagination.

The sound of steps was heard from the outside. The poet absquatulated immediately. The door was opened and his brother Darveshali came in asking his permission. Although he was an educated and kind man he was not like his brother in many ways. He was a light-minded, light-hearted and muddle-headed man. Navoiy looked at his drunken eyes and smiled with allegory.

– Tell me, please, bro, what is going on in the city?

– I know nothing but the conflict between Shiah and Sunnite, -Derveshali replied and sat slowly. – Sunnites are complaining everywhere: "The king belongs to Shihahs and the imams in the mosques are also Shihahs... It is impossible to bear it any longer!" – they say.

– Unfortunately, this meaningless conflict came up according to the order by the king, – said Navoiy shaking his head. Isn't there anything to do except putting people apart? That is very interesting! Actually he was supposed to care about the economy, the troops, the students at madrassahs, the scientists and thinkers, about the treatment of different beks and authorities; about the peasants and craftsmen instead of organizing conflict between two mazhabs¹ of the Islam religion. My brother, the most important thing is

¹ Direction or stream in Islam



to stay away from various conflicts and fights. There is only one God in the world. We can see his face everywhere: in the beams of the sun, in the waves of the oceans, in the mountains and shivering of the leaves. The soul has to be filled with its love and thoughts.

Darveshali tried to understand the gist of the poet's words and so he looked down and kept silence for a while. He always liked his brother's words and opinions and respected him very much.

- I do not want these religious conflicts to spread all over the country... - said Darveshali at last.

- All right, we will try to eliminate such kind of conflicts, - said Navoiy in a very serious tone. - Though we do not prefer any of these mazhabs of Islam to another one, we will take into consideration the unity of the people and the nation. My brother, there is nothing better than reading a book, thinking and learning a poem in the world. These are the sweetest things in the world and my character likes it very much. I just wanted to live in a quiet life and enjoy these things.

But as you know I have been asked to carry out some political work here... I just took into consideration the satisfaction and benefit of the nation and that's why I accepted the job. There is much work to do in this holy country and our nation is kind of thirsty for such kind of work. For instance, I have an idea of creating a library... now you are the head of king's library, that's why I am telling you this.

- I will do my best to realize your every wish, - said Darveshali putting his hand on his breast.

- We must create such a library which will be approved and respected by the entire nation, - said Navoiy with a great enthusiasm. There must be books belonging to every sphere of life whether it deals with science or art, ancient and modern. The library must



include various books where modern Aristotle in the sphere of philosophy, mathematics like in ancient Greeks, medical students who like Avicenna, astronomers who like Ulughbek and modern poets who like Firdavsiy and Nizomiy Ganjaviy could study here. They will develop science and invent new treasures of ideas there. If their inventions enrich our world of science, in that case we will get our point. Derveshali, keep this in your mind whatever you start doing, do it with love to the nation and this love should become your measurement for every step you take.

– Of course, it should be like you have said, – said Darveshali, scratching his beard, – a man who serves for his nation and people will certainly be appreciated.

Navoiy started at his brother meaningfully.

– Being recalled by the people as a good man is the greatest gift, – he said in a sudden tone. – I wish you were always so nice and clever, bro.

Darveshali tried to hide his eyes as if he was embarrassed. Then he started to talk about the library again. He told Alisher that first of all, they have to build a large building. Navoiy had a look at the candle on the niche, when he was about to get up Darveshali saying: “I will... I will...” and stood up quickly and took the candle and put it in the middle of the room and cut its tip with the scissors. The poet took a bunch of rustle paper and put on a thick book. He dipped the pencil into the ink-stand and started writing something. After a while Darveshali came closer. He opened his eyes widely and kept looking at his brother’s handwriting. The paper began to be filled in with very strange lines. At last, Navoiy put the pencil down and looked at his brother with a smile.

– Pay attention to these figures, – he said to Darveshali pushing the paper to him, – we are not good at architecture. Of course, the master of architecture

will design it professionally, but the building which we are going to construct should be approximately like this.

The image on the paper was the plan of the building. Darveshali continued looking at it while the poet explained to him every feature and interior and exterior decorations of it. He answered every Darveshali's question as if he had seen this building somewhere before and liked it very much. Then he talked to Darveshali about gathering the books. In order to increase the copies of the valuable books he asked Darveshali whether he knew the masters of book covers and good handwriters.

When the roosters of Herat broke the silence of night for the second time Darveshali went to his room to sleep. But the poet was still cheerful. He got into his thoughts for some moment again in the silence of the night; he took a piece of paper and went on thinking with a pencil in his hand. So, he started writing a poem.

Then he read the quatrain poem whispering and smiled. When the ink dried, he put the paper into the leather folder and then started to look through a thick Arabic book.

* * *

The next day when the sun was up and he came out his servant handed him a smaller but strong and young horse. The poet got onto it putting his leg into the stirrups and the horse started walking.

As it was Sunday the streets were overcrowded. Everybody was hurrying to the market: the peasants on horses and donkeys, dozens of camels, old women carrying baskets on their heads, knitters with their clothes and another crowd of people.

As soon as the poet approached a large gate of Bogi Zogon passing through Hiyobon Street, the warriors



watching and controlling the situation greeted the secretary and held the reins of the horse. The poet got off the horse without their help and entered Bogi Zogon. – This was a very large garden rich in various palaces, mansions and other attractive buildings. He walked along the clean and wide road surrounded by trees and the beams of the sun were approaching it through the leaves of the trees making a very good view. After some time he came to a very big parterre. It looked like as if the entire flowers of the world had been gathered and planted here. This was so beautiful that no one could pass without looking and admiring it. Navoiy liked flowers and colors very much. He watched them with a great admiration, as usual. Then he went to the building decorated by the best architects. He opened the door decorated with curved flowers and spherical ornaments and entered a smaller but beautiful room. Here he was met by his friend Khodja Afzal. He was a short, polite man with cheerful eyes and he was of the same age with Alisher. Khodja Afzal was brilliant at calculations and secretarial jobs and besides he was honest and professional at governmental work.

– I have been waiting for you, please come in, – Khodja Afzal stood up and asked him to take a seat. – There is nobody at the chancellery yet. And I guess, the king is still at the harem.

Navoiy, first, asked his friend about his personal work and then as usual, the theme was changed to general matters concerning the government and the people. Navoiy talked about major peculiarities of state, about the king's attitude towards the nation and vice versa, and the responsibility of viziers, beks and the lowest authorities in front of laws. He also talked about urgent measures for improving the lifestyle of people. Khodja Afzal agreed with Navoiy

completely and told him that he wanted these dreams to be realized soon.

— We should create a state in Khorasan, — said Navoiy with an excitement, — that other nations could learn from it. I want people to be out of barbarism! Humanity is the greatest creature among the other ones. The humanity must have pure, beautiful and glorious life. If the people of the government become clever, honest and take care of people, life can be changed into golden one.

— A very good idea, a very valuable dream, — said Khodja Afzal. —but in this country the authorities are used to humbling the ordinary people... and this is a problem!

— The humbling should be eliminated everywhere, — said Navoiy seriously. — reconciliation with oppressors is a great crime. Even if we ourselves cannot eliminate it we will have to complain about it to the king and ask him to be cleverer and fight for justice.

A servant came in and told Navoiy that he was asked by the king. The poet went out and walked toward the forty marble columned palaces on the right. He left his shoes at the threshold, opened the glittering door and entered. He bowed three times in front of Husain Boyqaro who was sitting at the top of the room and then asked permission to sit. Husain Boyqaro was a strong man with a wide chest and compact torso. His eyes were wide and sharp and they expressed both willpower and trickiness. At the same time one could notice unsteadiness, light-mindedness and a playful character through his eyes. He had a large hat decorated with pearls and a robe decorated with golden flowers, expensive stones etc. and his wide belt was decorated with golden spherical ornaments, large pearls and diamonds from Badakhshan. The windows were looking out at the beautiful garden and the walls, the



ceiling was decorated with golden, silver ornaments and mosaics of the room would attract anybody's attention. There were the most beautiful silk carpets on the floor and golden chandeliers on the ceiling and original Chinese dishes and plates in the niches. One could admire them for a long time.

As usual, Navoiy asked the king how he was doing. Husain Boyqaro would also try to show him as his old friend. He talked to Navoiy about appointing new khakims to some provinces and how to treat Sulton Mahmud, the son of Abusaid Mirzo, and about other matters. Navoiy pointed out that as the khakims were supposed to be appointed people who would take care of people and be honest and polite to them. He told him that it would be better to have friendly relations with Sulton Mahmud, but if he tried to conquer Khorasan not being satisfied with Maverannakhr he was to be punished and killed. Husain Boyqaro did not object to these ideas, he kept silent and said:

– Do you know Majididdin Muhammad? – he asked suddenly.

– Yes, I do, – Navoiy replied. – But I do not know his character.

– He is a very clever man, – said Husain Boyqaro shaking his head. – He is serving to Mirzoi Kichik very honestly. He is very honest and appreciates us very much. I like him very much. I would like to appoint him as parvonachi¹ for me.

– If he is really honest, – said Navoiy hesitatingly, – and if you have checked him on your own I do not have any objections...

Husain Boyqaro didn't say anything about him anymore. He took a folded piece of paper out of his brocade mattress and handed it to the poet. Navoiy

¹ One of the highest occupations during the times of khanates. Parvonachi would mostly be beside the king and write decrees and orders; he would tell the king about the work.

opened the expensive soft paper and looked at the king with a smile. It was a ghazal composed by Husain Boyqaro.

Husain Boyqaro was interested in poetry since his childhood. When Husain Boyqaro studied with Navoiy in his childhood they have learned poems by Persian, Turkic poets, talk about poems and verses and learn by heart the whole odes and ghazals. But Boyqaro mostly used to think about the throne and becoming a king when he was a child, so he had paid less attention to the poetry and only composed a poem from time to time.

First, Navoiy read the ghazal on his own. Then he read it loudly and beautifully. This was also another ghazal by Husain Boyqaro devoted to love, as usual. Navoiy praised the following lines very much:

*O'tka yoqqil sarvni, ul qaddi ra'no bo'lmasa,
Yelga bergil gulni, ul ruhsori zebo bo'lmasa,
Sarv birla gul tamoshosiga maylim yo'q turur,
Bog' aro ul sarvi gulruhdin tamosho bo'lmasa!*

41



He analyzed these lines and pointed out that there were special meanings, thoughts by the poet and then he spoke as if he was arguing with someone: "Our language is so pure, colorful and expressive. It can express any spirit and sense. I am sure that our language has got more opportunities to compose poetry than the Persian language. What would our narrators and Persianist people say having read these lines? I guess they can say nothing!"

– The lion¹ of poems is defending this language so who can prove the opposite of it? – said Husain

¹ Here Husain Boyqaro made a game of words. In the word "Alisher" – "sher" is translated into English as "lion". So here Boyqaro meant Alisher saying "lion" and it can be considered as one of the highest appreciation towards him (*translator*)

Boyqaro smiling. – Our friend has demonstrated the beauty and the power of our language by his valuable works... Do you remember how you used to propagandize our language with a great love in your childhood? And you are the one who made me love our native language. And I still have that love in my heart.

Navoiy listened to these words praising him very modestly looking down. Then Husain Boyqaro said that he was going to give his poem to all the poets to write a reply to it.

– Imagine, – said Navoiy smiling, – if one hundred poets write a reply one hundred verses will be composed. It means that a flower will blossom and give a huge fruits for people!

The guardian came in and said that authorities had gathered and Husain Boyqaro let them come in. Beks, viziers, great authorities and the king's close friends came into the room dressed in Chinese silk robes and other clothes. Each of them sat where they would usually sit according to their position. The bek of beks, Muzaffar Barlos, sat down at the closest place to the king. He was very proud of his service to Husain Boyqaro when he was fighting for the throne in the deserts and mountains. He liked to show it off to everybody and that's why he behaved as if he owned a share of the government. In general, all of these people, who had been assigned to such a high positions, were famous for some features or deeds. Muhammad Burunduq Barlos comes from ancient beks, he is a very smart commander and great man. But he was fond of birds and hunting so much that if one of his birds died he would say that it would have been better if one of his sons had died instead of that bird. Zulun Argun is a stupid man but he is good at fencing and he is a very brave bek. He plays chess with his both hands. Islim Barlos is an ordinary man and brilliant at hunt-

ing and birds. He can throw a bow with such power that it will pierce into a wood. He is also a very clever man, in general. Mugulbek likes gambling very much! Badriddin was so fast that once he jumped over seven horses at a time. Said Badriddin was good at dancing because his body was also good for it. He has even invented several dances. Khodja Abdulla Marvoriy has a huge package of knowledge in every sphere of life. He plays qonun¹ very well. He reads verses very beautifully. His handwriting is awesome. He chooses poems very attentively and with great excitement. But unfortunately, he is brilliant at debauchery too.

Husain Boyqaro looked at the people who were bowing to him as a sign of respect with great pride as he himself liked various parties and pleasure. Then he talked to beks about the troops. He got some information about the regions from his viziers. Then he asked Sheikh-ul-Islam² his opinion about a case. Even though he was talking very patiently and slowly, one could notice that he was hurrying very much. Then he talked about hunting and birds. Islim Barlos opened his eyes largely as it was his sphere of knowledge. He turned to the king, stood proudly and started to give information about the types and features of birds. Muhammad Bu runduq Barlos also interfered in the conversation.

The conversation about hunting slowly started to attract everybody's attention. The king listened to them sometimes smiling and sometimes thoughtfully. At last, Husain Boyqaro ordered them to get ready for a big hunt and asked Islim Barlos to be responsible for all preparations and work concerning the hunt. Then he gave him a sign to sit down. The king invited everybody to his royal party. Everybody stood up and bowed as respect towards the king and Husain Boyqaro went to other room walking proudly.

¹ Special musical instrument.

² Sheikh ul Islam is the highest occupation in the Islam religion.



CHAPTER III

I

Majididdin came back from work to his house in the evening. He was greeted by the maid-servant called Bustan inside the house. She told him that his wife had just been taken by the servant from the palace to the king's head wife, Beka Sultonbegim's, party. Even though Majididdin was an envious husband he liked this news: her dignity and level attracted royal madams' attention too. This means, one of these days his wife will invite the queen and her entire servants and friends and esteemed ladies from Herat to his house too. Anyway he must take this chance and get a job from the palace!

Majididdin entered the room and laid down. Then he asked the servant to put the candle in front of him. As he was not hungry he even did not pay any attention to the meal brought by Bustan; he just asked her to bring him some juice. Bustan poured some juice into a colorful bowl and handed to him. But she noticed that her proprietor had some bad thoughts in his mind so she tried to get out of the room quickly.

– Come here, you! Sit down. – shouted Majididdin in anger.

The servant came closer to him and sat down as if she was waiting for an order by him. She tried to hide her beautiful and sinless eyes. When she was twelve years old she was captured by desert pirates in Badakhshan and came across various conflicts and difficulties and at last, two years ago she was bought by Majididdin as a slave at the age of fourteen. So Bustan was thrown into the oppressive hands of destiny and had to survive in the most complicated situations of life, nevertheless she was still hoping and dreaming



of a freedom in future. She tried to keep her purity. Bustan suspected that her owner was thinking about some affairs with her when she first met him. She could not look at his eyes when she had to meet him alone.

Majididdin emptied the bowl and wiped his beard and mustache with his handkerchief. He stared at her for some time. Then he thought that she would be more beautiful and attractive if she changed her dirty dress to a brand new silk one. Although it was a very convenient time for realizing his bad thoughts, he decided to send her to a bathhouse and dress her beautifully some day in the future and then to make love with her. He pulled his hand towards her and shook up his handkerchief right in front of her face. Bustan got frightened.

– Oh, my lovely daughter, I am going to find some friends for you one of these days, what do you say?

She was so frightened by her owner that she could say nothing but move her eyes away.

– Why are you keeping silent? I am going to bring some more girls like you. You will be the head of them. You will have less work to do then. All of you will dress up like the ladies from Bogi Eram...

These words strengthened the girl's fear and shyness even stronger. She bowed even harder and kept looking down; she did not know how to get out of the room. Fortunately, at that very moment, somebody knocked the door. Bustan ran out as if she had been released from a cage. She ran putting on her shoes quickly. After a while she came back to him and told him that the man by the name of Abulziyo was going to meet with him. Majididdin went out slowly. Having heard a familiar voice in the darkness, Majididdin got very happy but he tried to look even more serious and proud and greeted Abulziyo, one of the most fa-



mous rich people in Khorasan and invited him inside. Abulziyo sat on a thick adras kurpacha¹ wiping his dark, black beard covering his thin face and said amen.

– I heard that the king appreciates you very much, – said Abulziyo with a serious face. – One of these days we will congratulate you on a new appointment, I hope.

– Where did you hear that? – Majididdin asked him pretending not to know anything.

– The king pointed you out at the meeting. I heard that from one of those who participated at that meeting...

– I heard it as well... Perhaps, if the king pays a little attention to his devoted servants, – said Majididdin and then asked his guest how he was doing.

He mentioned nothing about his flourishing business, good income and his caravans travelling to India and China. As most merchants he also pointed out his unsuccessful business.

When Mujididdin asked Bustan to have something to eat, the guest refused it.

– I have just come back from a big party, – he said playing with his diamond ring on his finger, – I have come to you to settle a problem. I do not know what you will say...

– I will do my best, of course, if I can, – said Majididdin putting his hand onto his breast, – I always want to help my friends.

Abulziyo's forehead screwed up. He closed one of his eyes and stared at the candle for a moment. Then he leaned towards Majididdin.

– How is the Treasury?

Majididdin replied smiling:

– The king's treasury is like a river... But there is one difference: if water increases it will certainly flood. But the Treasury will never get flooded.

¹ Traditional Uzbek blanket where people sit on

– You are completely right, – said Abulziyo, – Particularly; it is very difficult for our generous king's treasury. I guess our king likes parties and enjoying life very much. They say that he has been organising very great parties to surprise people. And I was thinking of helping the treasury...

– How would you like to do it? – asked Majididdin getting interested in it.

– You do know that the treasury is filled by the finances from the people and nation. And I want to give the all needed money to the treasury and then I get it from the citizens step by step...

– I got you, got it, – said Majididdin impatiently, – You want to collect some of the taxes from the citizens, don't you?

– Yes, you are right, – answered Abulziyo, – if you help me, this problem will be solved quickly: and you may use Prince Mirzoyi Kichik as well. But anyway you decide what to do.

Majididdin leaned a little and played with his eyes, half closing them. Now he could see the benefits of being friends with merchants. He was completely sure that he could manage it. But he intentionally kept silent as if he had just come across a complicated issue.

– You will not visit the king alone, I have already prepared a big gift for him... and I am ready to pay you as well.

Mujididdin kept pretending again. He said that the king or some viziers could object it.

– I have not got any experience about it, – said Abulziyo, – that's why only Herat region is enough for me. I know that our king needs much money nowadays.

– All right, imagine, I take all the responsibility on me, – said Mujididdin smiling, – but I would like to have my share in this good deed. It might even be a very small share...



Abulziyo had never expected such kind of offer so he scratched his forehead. Then he said with a forced smile:

– You must become a vizier, as it is your destiny and happiness. Why do you need it?

– I also want to have my own business and besides there are many viziers and beks who do their own business.

– All right, I accept this...- said Abulziyo unwillingly.

Majididdin told him that he would try to get permission on very convenient terms and he would negotiate it only on behalf of him. Besides, Majididdin told him that he himself was supposed to be his secret shareholder. Abulziyo took a sack out of his pocket and put it in front of Majididdin. Majididdin's face started to sparkle as a gold glittering in the lights of candle. He thanked Abulziyo and put the sack under the kurpacha immediately. When the guest left, Majididdin opened the sack. He counted the golden coins one by one and then put them into his trunk. Majididdin could not sleep thinking about how to present Abulziyo's gifts as his and settle the problem through Mirzoyi Kichik.

II

Togonbek had been enjoying life riding one of his khadja's horses in Herat for a week already. He had a new robe and a new hat on, besides, now he had money all the time. The next day right after he started to serve Majididdin, he got his inherited knife back. The nights were long and having had dinner he would run to the pub again. He even managed to become friends with the most famous alcohol drinkers, riders and shooters of the city. During the first days he used to

meet his khadja seldom. Then, when Togonbek started to share his ideas with his khadja during their conversation, he started to talk to him a lot. There was almost nothing to do for Togonbek in Majididdin's house. He has just been to Majididdin's fields inherited from his father for the past two or three months to control the peasants there.

One day in the morning when Togonbek was saddling a beautiful Turkmen horse an old slave Nurbo came up to him and said that khadja wanted to see him. Togonbek kept saddling and cleaning the horse as if he did not hear him and then said:

– Finish up the work, you, old idiot. Take the broom and clean it very thoroughly!

Togonbek cleaned his clothes at the door and then entered Majididdin's room; he stood on his knees and stared at his khadja with his sly and small eyes.

– What can I do for you?

Majididdin told him that now Abulziyo was responsible for collecting the taxes of Herat region and he also was a shareholder in this work. He also told him that he had spent much time recently and he needed some money, so he ordered him to start collecting some taxes starting that day.

– You have done a very smart thing! – said Togonbek leaning towards his khadja. – All right, a job of tax collector is not easy, but explain me what to do, please. Majididdin explained to him everything about the taxes collected in Khorasan, types of lands and etc. As it was the time for collecting the “qush puli” he explained it in detail. Then he told him about the regions which belonged to him and took a sheet of stamped paper out of the book on the niche and said: “This is your certificate, keep it in a safe place”. Togonbek took the certificate and put it into his pocket without reading it and said smiling: “So wish me good



luck!" then he said goodbye to him and went out. He got on the horse saddled by Nurbobo and rode away. As usual, he rode the horse very fast and came into a village in the middle of the day. It was too hot. He rode very fast even there. He looked for a place to stay and at last stopped at a country cottage and got off the horse there. He left the tired and sweating horse under a tree and he himself went towards the shady bushes. He stopped at an old woman busy with distaff sitting at the aryk flowing fast among the thick trees.

– God help you, my mother!

The old woman did not hear him because of the noise of the distaff and the water. Togonbek pushed her with his whip. The old woman turned her thin face to him, stared at him and said:

– Come, my son, what do you want from me?

– Go and bring me some ayran¹, – he ordered in a brutal voice.

The old woman shook her head with a white shawl and said: "All right, my son". But she did not move she just shouted: "Dildor! Hey you, Dildor!" A girl came out of the ruined wall behind the trees and started to walk slowly and having seen Togonbek she got very shy and then she stopped at a distance. Dildor was a girl of sixteen or seventeen. She was a tall, slim and very attractive girl. Togonbek watched her closely and said: "She is the best of the best!" and he remembered a line read at one of the parties in Herat lately. He liked these lines very much then:

*Aningkim ol enginda meng yaratti,
Bo'yi birla sochini teng yaratti.*

Togonbek thought: "These verses had been written especially for this girl by the poet!"

¹ A soft drink made of milk

– Why did you call me, aunty?! – asked Dildor having turned red.

– Bring some ayran for your brother here, my daughter.

When Dildor was about to turn around the old woman stopped her saying “Hey...” and then she said politely:

– Over there, – the old woman pointed to the apple tree, – prepare a place over there! Would you like to have a rest, my son?

Togonbek who was watching the girl shook his head extraordinarily. The girl brought a small carpet, clean kurpacha and a pillow and prepared a place for a rest quickly. Then she brought ayran in a big bowl, handed it to Togonbek not looking at him and then she went away and started to pound something. Togonbek drank up the ayran up to the end and cleaned his mustache quickly. He put his whip and hat down and lay onto the pillow. He was still watching the girl. As Dildor was pounding something when she moved her hands her breasts would shake under the linen dress. Togonbek, who had been to various countries of the world, saw different nations and peoples and served for many khans and khakims, had never seen such a beautiful girl like Dildor before. But Togonbek dreamt of getting married to a prominent bek's or khakim's daughter, so he looked at Dildor as a tool of getting pleasure only.

The old woman stopped her work and came up to Togonbek.

– To which bek do you belong? Where are you going to? – she asked.

– I am an independent man! – Togonbek replied seriously. – Are there any men in this house? Where are they?

The old woman who has seen such kind of men a lot in her life answered him without paying any attention:



– I have an only son. He is the father of that girl. He went to hashar at our khakim's land. Our harvest and crops are left in the field, but the head of the country does not pay any attention. He is busy finding different tasks for ordinary people... Do you want to say something to my son?

– I just want to ask for money. If you pay me, that is enough for me!

The old woman's face and eyes changed strangely. And she got pale.

Are you a tax collector?

Togonbek nodded as a sign of confirmation. The old woman sat on the edge of the carpet as if she were very exhausted.

– Oh my son, – she said in a begging voice, – let god bless you and please, mercy us. We have not got anything to pay. We have already given all what we had. We have been covered with taxes such as “qush puli”, “sohib jam”, “mirob”, “sarona” and others lately...

Togonbek said nothing. He just kept splitting around and winding himself with his handkerchief. He played with his silver whip for a while and then called the woman:

– Oh my god! God created women for gossiping and talking.

– Whom should I complain, my son?! – said the woman politely.

– Don't talk too much... put fire under the pot. Put a lot of meat into it. If you don't have wine, bring me some bouza then. Be quick, I am very hungry.

– We do not have any meat, – said the woman, – oh my son. If you want to have some pottage or noodles I can prepare it for you with pleasure.

– What about that goat? – asked Togonbek pointing to a thin goat eating some grass.

- My son, that is our neighbor's goat...-the woman tried to assure him.

It does not make any difference! - said Togonbek.

The old woman looked down thoughtfully and kept silent for a while. An apple fell down from the tree right beside Togonbek. Togonbek took the apple and smelt it, and then he spoke to Dildor: "This is yours. Take it from my hands and I wish my God would give you to me some day!"

Dildor put the pound down and ran away. Togonbek's hand was left in the air frozen and untouched. After a while he threw the apple with anger. His small eyes burnt very badly and his lips shivered. The old woman looked at him with fear: "Don't get upset, my son, she is a very shy girl... I will bring you some more bouza again. Then I will cook some meal for you, my son", - she said and stood up.

- Call the head of the region, -shouted Togonbek behind her with anger. - if you don't pay the tax today I will rip out your livers instead of the money!

The old woman turned around and started to shiver: "I think he comes from juji's dynasty. Oh my god, please, punish the authorities!" she went towards the goat. She wanted to hide it from his eyes but then she changed her mind in order not to get Togonbek angrier. She walked towards the farmstead to get a meal ready for the tax collector.

Togonbek was lying under the tree sometimes getting sleepy and sometimes getting watchful. The head of the village came up to him tired and sweating of the heat. Togonbek, who had already calmed down, explained to him his purpose. The head of the village always tried to cover his villagers from various unfair taxes even though he never paid taxes himself. Although he understood that it was useless to persuade



him according to his treatment and face he did not give up and gave it a shot.

– Oh my son, – he said wiping the sweat off his forehead, – we have paid the tax called “ushr” recently and thought that we were out of problems for a while, but it is not high time to pay the tax which you are demanding now. Each tax has got its own period and time. I am aware of these things very well. Just think about it, my son.

– Tell some meaningful words, sir! – Togonbek shouted. – I work according to my khadja’s order and words.

– To tell the truth, my son, nowadays peasants are hungry and bare, – said the head of the village. – it is impossible to ask them for something until they get the harvest.

– I know that many lands belong to blue blooded people. And they do not have to pay this tax. If the peasants are hungry, how shall we collect the tax then? – shouted Togonbek.

The head of the village kept silent for a while to get a rest. Then he whispered as if he was talking to himself:

– I think that a conflict might come out if we start collecting the tax in an inappropriate time...

– Have you come here to frighten me, sir? – said Togonbek suddenly. – Thank God, I have seen many battles in my life...

– Oh my son, – said the head of the village, – I had already understood that you were a brave and strong man when I saw you for the first time at a distance. I can assure you about it. Just I would like to tell that people of our village are somehow a little bit hot blooded ones. They were about to complain to the capital city about some authorities the other day. If you act carefully you will not come across any problems and get your money in a peaceful way...

– Togonbek stood up as if he had lost his temper.

– Please, follow me, I will gather the tax with my rules and ways and you will just watch me!

The head of the village stood up. He gave a sign to the old woman among the trees who had been gathering wood to feed Togonbek's horse and left for the village with Togonbek.

Dildor ran towards her grandmother and said: "Where has Mongol disappeared?" The old woman told her that he had gone to the village to gather the tax and asked her to feed his horse. The girl approached the horse damning him a lot. She had a look at its silver ornaments with pleasure and then released its reins. Then she took its reins and pulled it to a place with bunch of grass. Then she came back to the old woman. She wanted to help her. Dildor grew up in her grandmother's hands after her mother's death so she liked her grandmother as her mother.

– What are you going to cook? – Dildor asked.

– I want to cook omelet for the villain...

– You are just wasting your time, granny, – said Dildor with sorrow. – he is just like a dog which bark and that's all. Does he need for the poor's meal?

– The old woman kept silent. As she was walking to the farmstead with some wood in her hands, she stopped suddenly.

– You'd better be in some other place, my daughter, – said the old woman with a worried tone, – take the goat and be in some other place further than our house. Do you understand me?

Dildor nodded with a smile on her lips like cherries and brought the goat. She went into the thick bushes. She came to a wide wheat field glittering as gold. She tied the goat to a tree and then she put her legs into the pond and sat alone in silence. After a while she got bored. The birds sang for a short period of time



and then got silent again. Dildor has been collecting very tiny flowers on the ground to kill both boredom and time when suddenly a shivering sound was heard behind her. She got frightened and looked up with her scared eyes. Arslankul appeared behind the trees. She felt very happy to see him. She freshened up a little and gathered her hair with her fingers.

Arslankul was a handsome guy of eighteen. He was a very ordinary person who had grown up in hard labor and one could notice naive feelings in his eyes. He came from this village and was used to the pasture, served in the fields of landowners and dug the fields from his childhood. Now he has been working as a servant in one of the blueblood man's fields for the past three to four years. Dildor and Arslankul were united by pure love to each other two years ago. They both grew up in the hands of nature and they both worked together in their childhoods. Both the old woman and her father agreed to their marriage. But the wedding day has not been appointed yet.

Arslankul stretched his legs and sat right next to the girl. He wiped the sweat off his face. He ploughed his collars and looked at Dildor with a smile.

- You have done a great job hiding the goat: hungry wolves can be very bad.

- Dildor said:

- Have you met my granny?

- Yes, I have, - Arslankul replied. - but I knew about it before I met her.

- Have you seen that man? I have never seen the tax collector who could have even a tiny piece of justice.

- He is threatening the entire village, - answered Arslankul sadly. - He is very angry, they say...

- What shall we do if he tries to get us pay some tax? We do not even have a coin... - said Dildor worriedly.

Arslankul answered the following:

– He will roam in this region for a long time. If we ask him for time we will be able to pay, I guess. Are we paying this tax for the first time? Of course, no!

Dildor sighed feeling ease. Arslankul was very glad to remove the anxiousness from the girl. He came closer to the girl. He caressed the girl's hair. Dildor looked around first and then hugged the boy. Arslankul also hugged her and kissed her beautiful lips...

The girl released herself, collected her hair and went farther as if she were angry with him for kissing. Arslankul also came closer smiling. The girl started to run. Then they laughed at their manners. When Arslankul promised her that he would not do anything, Dildor came up to him again. The guy told her about his work. He told her that he was going to go to Herat to shop for himself and Dildor in autumn when he got his money from his khadja for gathering his harvest. Dildor asked him about the Herat market and the goods sold there. She had heard about them from grownups before she was just trying to make some clarifications about them. Even though Arslankul had been to this big city only twice (for very short period of time) he told her about Kashmir and Chinese silks sold by dealers and about many other things. Their souls were filled with hope and pleasure, they had already forgotten about the difficulties of life.

They left the goat there and went home for lunch. Arslankul went faster. When Dildor approached the house she saw Togonbek, the head of village and some of her scared fellow-villagers, so she did not go towards them she just went behind the wall.

Arslankul came up to them and sat a little bit farther than the people at the aryk. There were several cows, ox and sheep tied to the trees there. He understood that the tax collector brought them as a guaran-




tee. He tried to show his anger and his face got very serious and sad.

Many peasants were bringing several meals for the tax collector. Togonbek and the head of the village were busy with calculations, so they did not even look at the meals. At last, when they finished calculations he tried some of the meals and then stood up suddenly. He gave the cows and sheep to the head of the village and told him to gather all his wards until he came back from the Foryon village. Then he petted his horse for some time, got onto it and rode away. The head of the village held his collar and shook his head and said: "Adjure this villain. Let him fall off his horse and die!"

The people pointed their hands and said: "We have to complain to the king about him!"

CHAPTER IV

I

 58
A large square at the main gate of Bogi Zogon was filled with military men. Soldiers and warriors were coming from different sides. The horses were neighing and flags were shivering. The chain armor and steel helmets were sparkling in the sun. The silver handles of beks' whips, silver ornaments on horses' tools, the precious golden, diamond stones of swords were glittering. There were both old and young warriors among them. A usual life of Herat was still going on despite the big celebration. Herat has seen such kind of days many times in its past! If we do not take into consideration the children playing among the horses, all the other people were saying: "The king is about to attack Muhammad Yodgor. Good luck to him. The country should be in peace!" they would just say these words and keep working...

And at last, Islim Barlos appeared holding his special arms and led the troops.

Husayn Boyqaro came out on his horse through Bogi Zogon Gate.

It was very difficult to notice his sparkling royal clothes on his horse as it was decorated even better than him. His horse was dark black. Husain Boyqaro was one the best fighters in Timur's dynasty. He was holding the reins of his horse and proudly sat on it; and his horse was walking chewing its bit. Beks, commanders and respected people from honoured families were following him. They all were riding the best horses in Khorasan.

A bunch of guardians were going in front of the king giving a sign that the king was coming and they stopped people on donkeys and horses: make them get off the donkeys and if a person was on foot they made him lean against the wall on both sides of the street. Someone could even be beaten with a whip any time. The owners of shops were out and expecting the king to pass...

A group of students were standing at the gate of Gavharshodbegim Madrassah. They were discussing Yodgor Mirzo who started a mutiny in Astrobod and they were trying to guess how he was connected to Timur's dynasty. Besides, they were talking about various princes, whether they were alive, dead, coronated or not, famous or unknown. Sul-tonmurod and Zayniddin were having a very interesting conversation and making everybody laugh. When a very strong, serious and squint-eyed guardian was passing them Zayniddin cried out:

*Hech kasro nazdi dud naguzoshti,
In du shohi gov gar har doshti'*

¹ If a donkey had ox's horns, it would not let anybody come close to it.



His friends tried not to laugh, biting their lips, but when the guardian did not understand the irony they all burst into laughter immediately. Sultonmurod clapped his friend's shoulders and said: "if you were not here we would have already forgotten the laughter in this world..."

When Husayn Boyqaro approached them solemnly, all students put their hands together as a sign of respect. When Sultonmurod looked up the king had already passed away. He saw Navoiy. Navoiy was going together with Khodja Afzal, poet Saykhim Sulahliy, Kamolidin Husain Kozargohiy, but he was holding the reigns of his horse weakly and not paying any attention to the noise and celebration as if he was thinking about his own dreams, ideas. The poet expressed his respect and appreciation with a smile to the students who were looking at him with love and happiness.

The usual life on the streets began again. The student went into the madrassah and disappeared. Sultonmurod did not want to go into the hujra again and carried on reading. He was to find some rare books which he needed. Suddenly he remembered that he wanted to meet with the chemist Mavlon Abdulahad for a long time. He went towards darvozai Qipchoq, gate of the city, immediately without thinking it over.

He stopped at a shabby house, which was opposite to a big silent cemetery covered with many plain trees and elms where there was a grave of a holy person of Herat. He started to knock on the door which was decorated with curved flowers which used to be the best examples of the past. The door was now very old. No one answered so he began to knock harder. One of the passers-by told him that the owner had gone deaf pointing at his own ears. Then he told him that he could go in without any doubts. He recalled that the owner of the house was deaf immediately so he

smiled and went in. He stopped in the middle of the yard which looked like an abandoned place covered with various wild plants and stood in deep silence for a while. He had a look around and then went towards a big and high house which looked like a fortress where the chimney was smoking. When he came closer to the house its small and unattractive door was opened and a man with a clay jug in his hand came out. He had a dirty hat on his big and round head; he was wearing old torn and spotted overalls; his eyes were in tears, the cheeks of his serious and majestic face were glittering and his white beard had already turned into yellowish color. This man who was about fifty years old was a famous chemist and poet Abdulahad. He had been studying chemistry here alone for the past twenty years: he made various experiments on different materials and worked on his interesting and surprising subject of study with great patience and inspiration. His eyesight and hearing had gone bad from the fires and influence of various materials.

The chemist was shocked to see this unfamiliar guy. His entire appearance changed and showed his dissatisfaction. As Sul-tonmu rod knew such kind of people's character he thought that it was a usual case for him. He came up to the chemist fast and bowed as a sign of greeting and appreciation. The chemist examined him thoroughly and expressed his despondence with a deep sigh.

– Why have you come to my place? – he asked slowly but with an unsatisfied tone.

– Sul-tonmu rod kept silent. He did his best to attract the scientist's attention and appreciation. First, he praised him a lot and then he introduced himself and told him why he had come there.

– I cannot be friends with a man who interrupts my lesson, – said the chemist with the same tone again.



– Sir, – said Sul-tonmu-rod with appreciation again, –I am a kind of person who considers a complicated life devoted to science and knowledge as a great one. You are Jafar¹ in the field of chemistry. Your every word is more valuable than any gold and diamonds for people like me who are eager to learn. Allah praised you with such a great gift and talent in science, and I think you should share it with other people like me.

Abdulahad frowned by his burnt eyebrows and went away saying nothing. Sul-tonmu-rod now was hopeless that the chemist would receive him and just kept looking behind him. The scientist poured some darkish liquid in a jug into the pit in the middle of the yard and came closer to him looking down and asked him with a very secret voice:

– Are you sure that you want to learn chemistry?

– What should I do to prove it to you? – asked Sul-tonmu-rod.

– Welcome, my son!

Sul-tonmu-rod got very happy to hear that and followed the scientist into the house. This “chemistry laboratory” resembled the large khanahak of a mosque. As there were two large holes on its blackened ceiling so the room was not dark. There were many clay jugs of various sizes, copper and iron dishes, strange glasses and other things in the niches of the room. High and low pockets, lined up in an elevated part of the lab, were not like ordinary ovens. In some of them the fire was burning brightly. In a vessel, similar to the pot, something was steaming fragrantly.

For Sul-tonmu-rod it seemed that he was surrounded by some witchcraft. No matter how strong was his desire to learn the secrets of alchemy, no matter how he loved the mysterious experiments of the man, he did not dare to touch any vessel? Abdulahad seemed

¹ An ancient Arab chemist

as if he had forgotten about Sul-tonmu-rod completely. Without uttering a sound, the man diligently carried on doing his job: watching the fire, odorants seething in the vessels and sometimes he mixed them. Sometimes he retreated into the room, and then he came back again and took something to pound in a mortar.

After spending two hours in silence, Abdulahad approached the young man, who huddled in a corner, watching every movement of the scientist. This time he smiled without irony and he looked at Sul-tonmu-rod.

– Science of alchemy – he said in a whisper, is the science of the innermost secrets, the science of the invisible eyes of the uninitiated may prevent the disclosure of its mysteries.

– Dear Mentor, – said Sul-tonmu-rod begging – don't doubt the purity of intention of your servant. Your insignificant servant wants one thing – knowledge. Nothing other than that, do not throw shadows on the mirror of his soul. There are three basic things in our lives which cannot exist without other three things: the goods without trade, government without solid state policy, science without an exchange of views. Sir, in the exchange of opinions from the collision of thoughts the fire of truth will be flashed!

The alchemist seemed as if softened a little. After talking to Sul-tonmu-rod for a moment, he could not hide the fact that he was amazed by the sharpness of mind and vast knowledge of this young man. Apparently he had no more doubts about him, the scientist began to disclose the secrets of his science to Sul-tonmu-rod. After outlining the theory of ancient Greek and Arab sages about the structure of the world and the famous “four elements”, Abdulahad told him that the basis of these elements was a single entity, a certain substance; that there are seven substances corresponding to seven planets: the sun corresponds to gold,



silver to the moon, copper to the Venus and so on. But the more the alchemist talked, the denser he dropped into the veil of secrecy. He divided metals into two groups. The first group he called "patients" suffering from defects substances. With passionate excitement he said that the disadvantages of these metals can be removed by chemical means and by means of a substance, which he called "elixir", erected in the highest degree: mercury could be converted to silver, copper to gold. Sul-tonmu-rod knew this entire staff. But Sul-tonmu-rod got tired of listening to him patiently. But he did not dare to interrupt the scientist who devoted his life to chemistry.

Finally, when one of the hearths drawn sharp suffocated him, the alchemist quickly got up and ran over to the fire, started fiddling with some substances.

In the evening Abdulahad boiled water in a jug and spread out the tablecloth.

In the same room where countless experiments had been performed, and in the flickering flame of a candle they ate bread with raisins and held discussion about chemistry.

The next day the young scientist with a passionate enthusiasm got into alchemy. Working with various substances, he burned his hands and clothes. He, reasoned with Abdulahad, about changing of substances for hours, sometimes they even argued. Getting into the work so hard Sul-tonmu-rod didn't not even notice the sunset, so he did fifteen consecutive days. Then he said goodbye to the scientist and left.

The time was past noon. Approaching the city center, Sul-tonmu-rod started to notice something unusual in the eyes of passers-by, authorities, nukers¹ and bustling children running around. He understood that something very important had happened.

¹ Ancient Asian warriors

Stopping a painter who was quickly walking past, waving vigorously painted blue hands, Sul-ton-mu-rod began questioning him. Dyer said impatiently: - Mullah, the people have got a lot of trouble. Which one shall I tell you? - ran away. Sul-ton-mu-rod got very scared. He quickly went behind the painter. He came to the chancellery. There was a huge crowd in front of the couch in the square mostly urban artisans and there were all sorts of professions and continuity of farmers from the surrounding villages. The people were unarmed, but the anger that burned in their eyes, concentrated severe facial expression said that it was a terrible force about ready to explode. Sul-ton-mu-rod got frightened having seen the situation. Furtively looking around, they huddled around. The warriors were pale. They were looking around threatened of what was going to happen... Sul-ton-mu-rod as a cautious man who first feels stranded in a terrible thread and then rushes into the deep water, he listened to the conversation. People were complaining to each other about the unfairness of the tax collectors, the severity of taxes; they were loudly scolding some officials.

- Khodja Abdullah, Khodja Qutbiddin, Nizomid-din Bahtiyor must face us! - shouted hundreds of voices.


A timid looking gray bearded old man with tears complained to Sul-ton-mu-rod: "The king is Muslim, so are the viziers. But even so the infidel will not oppress his people so much. Fairness and justice has gone in the country! We have been ravaged by taxes. Some ragged peasant shouted right next to Sul-ton-mu-rod's ears:

- We do not leave here until you give out Togonbek!

- Which Togonbek, brother? - Sul-ton-mu-rod asked touching his shoulder.

- A newborn dog showed up... - we know Togon-bek! - waved farmer and disappeared in the crowd.





66

Sultonmurod wandered long in the jostle of excited people. He understood the underlying cause of the disturbance from fragmented phrases, full of rage and grief. After the king and many Viziers left Herat, Khodja Abdullah, Khodja Qutbiddin, Nizomiddin Bahtiyor and other officials illegally introduced new taxes. Using the absence of control, they tried as soon as possible to collect money not to the treasury but into their pockets. They used the most heinous means of punishing and persecuting the people, trampling on their rights. Sultonmurod who dedicated his life to science, usually kept away from the ordinary people. What is an ordinary human being, how he lives, what he thinks about – these questions have never come to Sultonmurod's mind. He believed that people are a throng. He was convinced that a person can only be perfected through science; Sultonmurod believed that disaster people do not see anything without science and they were just the result of ignorance. Now, after witnessing the storm of ordinary people's anger, he realized the absurdity of his views and ideas. After all, he made up his mind that policymakers like Khodja Abdullah, Khodja Qutbiddin also enjoyed the fruits of science, yet they satisfy their greed and selfish desires from people and it was unbearable violence and insults. So, it's not some knowledge thing! Besides knowledge, officials need many other qualities to control people and to make their lives bearable.

Suddenly, the crowd moved like the sea, raging against strong winds. Sultonmurod wanted to step aside, but the stream of people swept him along. There was a dump at the gates of the chancellery. Crowd, shouting, rushed inside and spread over a wide, tree-lined courtyard in the window of tax administration, hundreds of stones flew with a whistle... Khodja Abdullah jumped out of the window and ran towards the

trees. Whistling stones ran after him. Here he paused for a moment and grabbed his head, – his white turban was drowned in blood. The people broke cries of joy; he was wounded, managed to hide behind trees. People began to search Khodja Nizomiddin Bahtiyor now, but it turned out that Nizomiddin was hiding in a madrassah being scared to go home, riots broke out again, but he managed to flee.

Towards the evening prayer rage of the people start to cool down and part of the crowd dispersed, another part of the crowd marched to some other official's house. Sul-tonmu-rod was tired of the hustle and screams of excitement so he went to his madrassah. Having finished the evening prayer, he came back to the madrassah after it got dark. Eager to share their impressions, the young man entered Zayniddin's room, but he could not find his friend there and went to Aloiddin Mashhadiy's hujra. The poet, in the dim light of a finger size candle, was sitting, as usual, on a colorful carpet and said something to Togonbek who was stuck in the corner as a stump. In the hearth the fire was burning brightly. Meat was being cooked in the pot. A few bottles of wine stood near Togonbek...

Having greeted each other, Sul-tonmu-rod asked excitedly:

– Have you heard?

– About what? – Asked Aloiddin.

– There is an extraordinary thing going on outside. The people demand justice, their voices are shaking entire Heart... – Sul-tonmu-rod said excitedly.

– We have heard – said Aloiddin, looking at the pot with greed. – It's not the people, it is roaring wild beasts!

Sul-tonmu-rod realized that this poor creature was useless to argue, he sarcastically asked Togonbek:



– You have taken some position lately, – he said smiling sarcastically, – but you have been hiding it from us? Thank God, now we know what your job is... My advice to you: leave for somewhere far away tonight!

– What have I done wrong to the people? – Togonbek asked quietly.

The people smashed Khodja Abdullah Khatyb's head – said Sul-tonmu-rod – threw stones of curse towards your name as well.

Although Togonbek's face did not change, still his tongue did not move and Aloiddin squinted irritably to Sul-tonmu-rod.

– Togonbek is like a mountain and there is a whole mountain range behind him as well! – he shouted angrily

– You are right, I believe you, but the storm of people's anger cannot be defeated by any mountain! – Sul-tonmu-rod replied and left the room.

CHAPTER V

I

Husain's troops were encamped between Janushkhan and Isfarain. Mirza Yodgor had also gathered his troops somewhere near him hoping to seize power in Khorasan.

Yodgor Muhammad is a young prince from Timur's dynasty. He was not like other Timurids, who barely standing on his feet mastered the art of war and, not even growing a mustache, rode on horseback and led thousands of young men and tempered in the struggle for power, found delight in the hardships of hiking and noisy battles. Mirza Yodgor grew up in the hall and bliss. He was given the pleasures of life, serenely floating in a sea of wine, love and music. He was not tormented in the desire for power. Anyway, it lurked

in his heart, but only as a sweet distant dream. The will of the prince was in the hands of his beks and seasoned educators who sought to provoke a gentle, dreamy heart thirsty for bloody battles for glory and power in the boy's passion. His aunt Payyanda Sultanbegim, who had much experience in public affairs, also incited him to fight for the throne of Khorasan. In addition, he received considerable reinforcement from Turkmen Sultan Hasanbek. The conceited prince marched against the ruler of Jurjan – Emir Zohid Tarkhiy and easily won. Capturing Jurjan, he conceived hope to capture the capital of Khorasan and assume the crown.

Husayn Boyqaro was getting ready for a decisive battle to protect himself from the unexpected attack by the enemy though he was not surrounded by a moat of his camp, yet all sides securely fenced themselves by reinforced guard. Almost every day Yodgor's warriors would appear near his camp and they would throw arrows toward the camp for an hour, then they would disappear as suddenly as they had appeared. Sometimes the advanced detachments encountered belligerence, at that time both sides would shout at each other or grapple. After these short but violent clashes the opponents who had lost a few people and shed a lot of hot blood, would return to their camps...

Navoiy, who lived alone in a modest tent, was sad and worried. Almost every day he saw dozens of severed heads. Who laid down their heads in the interests of people who sow discord in the state, who was not firmly against "the former civil wars? For what the people who have the same blood, flesh and lifestyle, the same origin, a unique language and past divided into two hostile camps and began to destroy each other? The poet thought about the history of these people. An endless string of terrible pictures have



stretched right before his eyes. Yet Timur barely closed his eyes forever and his dead body had been buried when his sons began discord among themselves. The only consequence, the only result of a power struggle was a spraying state and wanton. Navoiy fierce in anger: Mirza Yodgor raised his axe over one branch of the tree, which apparently was still able to survive and grow.

When news about uprising spread, Mirza Yodgor came to Herat Navoiy urged Husayn Boyqaro to march immediately. Navoiy wanted to strengthen the power of Sultan Husayn in Khorasan not only because of the friendship that bound them since childhood. He also noticed a talented poet and patron of science in Sultan Husayn. Besides, Husayn Boyqaro knew military strategy and was good at fighting on the battlefield; he often showed heroic courage and courage in battles. Navoiy, who longed to see fairness, justice and sovereignty, expected many things from Husayn Boyqaro.

Although the poet seemed to be having a quiet life in his modest tent, he actually worked diligently to strengthen the forces: he tried to collect information about the forces of the enemy, the intentions of Mirza Yodgor. Finally, the decisive days came. Husayn Boyqaro called a large council.

He came out of a large silk tent guarded by special warriors and spoke about the rules of the war to Navoiy and several other experienced military commanders. These rulers and warriors had already been formed in incessant battles in the times of Chingizkhan, when the storm of fire and a sea of blood flooded over continents and kingdoms, and they were in the bloody campaigns against Timur that's why they had good experience in such battles and they started to give advice to Husayn Boyqaro. The beks expressed their views on how to advance the attack and who was supposed



to be appointed as a commander of individual units. Husayn Boyqaro who was now more attentive and focused than usual, supported their planned activities. Then he looked at the gathered with delight and excitement:

– Now we must turn to the book of heaven, mustn't we?

Broad, clumsy Islim Barlos nodded. Raising his eyes to the ceiling covered with braid of fringe even though he could not see the sky and said thoughtfully:

– Of course... What will the stars say?

The Sultan looked at his viziers.

– We have to call an astrologer here. Maybe he will announce that the star has risen favorable for us – the sultan said looking at Navoiy.

– And what will your Majesty do if odds say the opposite? – Navoiy asked with a smile.

Husayn Boyqaro did not try to answer.

– In that case we will only expect favorable time. On the day when our star will rise, we will sit on the horses too.

Beks started to look at both Navoiy and the sovereign from time to time but they kept silence.

– Great Sovereign, – said cautiously Navoiy – in our opinion, in any case one should follow the instructions of his mind. Everything is ready for our victory and there is no need to consult with the stars. You know, I am not a military man but I have studied the positions of both sides and the current situation for a long time and I think that this is an opportune moment for us. In the morning, when the sun rises you should raise your flag of victory.

– But we all know, – seriously and with conviction said Husayn Boyqaro – if there is no appointed time for a battle, victory averts its face. Therefore, commanders must consider the favorable time of a battle and consult with astrologers.



– History shows, – said Navoiy. – many trips that started in agreement with the predictions of astrologers ended tragically. There are more imaginations than reality in consideration of astrologers. I repeat once again we should attack the enemy at the dawn.

Zulnun Arbunbek combed his thick beard with his thick fingers. He seemed to be bored of disputes. Straightening up, he took a deep breath and, as usual, he said sharply and imperiously:

– There is much sense in our vizier's words... We have seen that there is no permanence in stars. Predictions often turn out to be a cry instead of joy!

Other lords were forced to agree with Navoiy and they strongly encouraged the sovereign. Then the meeting ended.

Servants helped Husayn Boyqaro put on his chain armor and helmet, tie up to his waist with a golden sword decorated with precious stones and also he hang a quiver and bow decorated similarly to his sword. Sovereign firmly stepped and came out of the tent. It was almost dawn... exhausted stars twinkled at a distance over the slumbering mountains shrouded in mist. Cool slight steppe wind ruffled the silk of the tents. The warriors were up. One could notice that they were hasty with their preparations for the big battle.

Padishah got on the horse decorated with gold and precious stones, which had been brought by his special servants. Surrounded by armed beks, Husayn Boyqaro rode into the troops quickly. Here he watched the preparations of the warriors attentively. Valibek, Mirzoi Kichik and Islim Barlos were appointed as commanders of the right wing, the left one was commanded by Emir Badriddin. He chose the most experienced and brave warriors among his troops and created the front side of the troops and they were entrusted

under the commandership of Sheikh Timur and Zulnun Argunbek.

As the sun started to rise the troops lined up and moved slowly towards the enemy. Swords, armor, lances and axes gleamed in the golden beams of the sun. The horses were shaking their heads impatiently trying to run. The faces of the warriors and beks were severe and cold.

Husayn Boyqaro went to the heart of the troops "like the soul in the human body," as for the words of the famous historian of that time. Loyal generals and horsemen surrounded him.

Guardians reported that Mirza Yodgor hastily rearranged his troops and apparently was preparing to resist. Husayn Boyqaro ordered to attack immediately. Karnays, surnays and drums started to be played. When the hostile army was seen at a distance, Islim Barlos and Valibek attacked to the left wing of Mirza Yodgor. Sheikh Timur and Zulnun Argunbek, trying to get to the back side of the enemy's troops, rushed at a gallop. Emir Badriddin boldly led his troops against the right wing of the enemy. The parts of Mirza Yodgor's troops under the leadership of Emir Ahmadali Barlos tried to repel the attack by Valibek and Islim Barlos: arrows rained continuously. But skilled Valibek and Islim Barlos who could fight like lions began to restrict the enemy. Cries became louder. Even though Emir Ahmadali Barlos strongly encouraged his warriors they stood huddling together and did not dare to move forward. When dozens of riders in the front rows were killed and their horses fell, confusion and disorder increased. Besides, as usual, Mongol warriors of Mirza Yodgor started to collect loot. They started to beat their own people instead of the enemy and took off their clothes and arms.



The right wing of Mirza Yodgor was in a hot battle. Emir Badriddin who was as light as a tit and tenacious like a hawk was gradually oppressing the enemy. Suddenly Turkmen horsemen of Mirza Yodgor's troops rushed to the very center of Husayn Boyqaro's troops. They shot a hail of arrows, but thousands of whistling arrows did not stop brave Turkmen warriors. Turkmens were approaching, waving their swords and shooting continuous arrows and they attacked the front wing of the enemy. A group of Turkmens broke towards Sultan Husayn. The guardians, surrounding the sovereign, tried to protect him with their swords and pikes. The people fell down, swords were broken, horses were left without riders and asked saddles and reins were dangling and they were roaming in various directions.

Husayn Boyqaro anxiously looked around. Dust hampered him to watch the battle. Finally, he could not take it anymore so he drew out his sword and rushed upon the enemy with his personal bodyguards. His huge horse broke into the battle. Husayn Boyqaro knew how to fight. Fighting for the throne he had led continuous years of wars and perfected his art of sword fighting. Even now he was fighting very well. His warriors also fought bravely beside their king not noticing the dead ones. They managed to push back the enemy, but the battle did not end here. The right and left wing forces of Mirza Yodgor had been broken and started to run away disorderly. This event has undermined the morale of the Turkmens. Now they were not eager to fight. Boyqaro's warriors intoxicated with the wind of victory ran after the enemy with loud cries. Clouds of choking and blinding dust rose into the air. Husayn Boyqaro's warriors, expelling Mirza Yodgor detachments scattered over a distance of several farsahs and towards



the night they returned with lots of loots and prisoners. Some of the prisoners, mostly commanders, were killed immediately. Then karnays and sunays were played at once to announce the victory.

II

The poet entered the luxurious silk tent, which was surrounded by guards. At first glance, Husayn Boyqaro was sitting on a cushion embroidered with gold; Navoiy noticed that the Sultan was concerned about something. With a formal bow, he sat beside the Sultan after his sign. There were not any true beks and viziers in the tent. Poet Hasanali Jalayir was sitting far away from the Sultan, putting on his knees a beautifully covered book. Majdiddin Muhammad, was sitting at a distance. Several interlocutors whose task was constantly to be present with the sultan and entertain him with their jokes and anecdotes, now were trying not to meet the angry Husayn's eyes. Navoiy did not notice any strange thing in him, because he knew that the situation was not easy. Husayn Boyqaro had not rejoiced by the victory over Mirza Yodgor too long. Recently the camp started to receive unpleasant news such as Mirza Yodgor gathered a large army again and that Emir Hasanbek helped him with several thousand nukers¹. They said that Sultan Mahmud with his army was waiting for a battle on the banks of the Amu, intending to attack Khorasan. Besides, many beks and warriors, who conspired with Mirza Yodgor, secretly left the camp of Husayn Boyqaro.

Navoiy asked the sultan about his health. Husayn Boyqaro said that the messenger arrived from Herat and looked at Navoiy seriously. Then he took a letter

¹ warriors

under his pillow and handed it to Navoiy. He carefully read the letter, then put it on his knee and turned to the Sultan looking down. Then he read the letter again. When he completely understood the situation he put the letter beside him on a satin kurpacha and looked at the Sultan. There was not any sense of fear, confusion or surprise in his look. His eyes retained their usual confidence and thoughtfulness. Unable to hide his excitement, the sultan said bitterly:

– What can we do to suppress the rebellious vagrants in the capital? We have talked about it to our emirs and beks. Maybe we will hear some good advice from you...

Navoiy, with his usual stately elegance and softness, replied:

– Great Sovereign, the fate and life of Khorasan are in your hands. What do you think about this sad event?

– We obtained the crown with the power of sword – after a moment of silence snapped Husayn Boyqaro. – The same sword must act to strengthen it.

The answer did not confuse the poet. Although the descendants of the lame Emir, who conquered the half of the world, were able to wield the sword well, they liked to boast rather than wielding the sword, they were fond of wine and cheerful feasts more than a battlefield. The poet believed that he could give some good advice to Sultan Husayn. But sometimes insignificant reason could inflate his anger like the wind. Navoiy slowly said:

– Sultan, you must be a skilled doctor and be able to heal the wounded hearts. According to your humble servant, the sword is not needed here!

Husayn Boyqaro did not answer, he just kept looking at the ceiling of the tent. All others were also keeping silence.

Painful silence was broken by Majididdin Muhammad:

– Truly, – he said, proudly looking at Navoiy – Plan of His Majesty the Sultan is the fruit of a sound mind in the world -. To educate rude people you need a sword, or at least a stick. The people do not deserve mercy and grace.

– The point is truth and justice – Navoiy said trying to contain his anger. – Do not tear the mouth which utters the truth – you have to chop off hands which are eager to shake the foundations of the truth. The right of the Sultan is to collect taxes, but they should not be a source of enrichment for several nefarious people! The collection of taxes should have certain laws and regulations, it is necessary to adapt them to the property status of the population. I repeat again and again, the fury of the people is to be justified. Our duty is to listen to people and listen patiently to their complaints.

– Things have gone too far, – retorted Husayn Boyqaro. – When the people who serve us have been stoned it is an insult to the crown. They could have written complaints instead of fighting against us.

– In our opinion, this is not so, – said Navoiy. – The crown of power is like the sun in the sky. The attitude to power is a stone thrown into the head of some insatiable dragon like Khodja Abdullah Khatib. If people are taking up the stones, then there is something like a mountain in their hearts, and it should be rinsed with the water of justice.

Husayn Boyqaro kept silence. He hesitated. Then he pointed his narrow, shifty eyes to the poet and said sadly:

– Ungrateful people like Khodja Abdullah will be punished for sure. But the rebels, who have violated the peace in the capital, must be punished too... At



least for deterrence, we have to fine them in order they will not dare to raise a rebellion again in the future ...

Navoiy sighed secretly. In order to break the stubbornness of the Sultan, he said seriously:

– Your majesty, if life and property of the people had been given to the wolves and if people are moaning in the clutches of these bloodthirsty creatures, it would be unfair not to listen to their moans. There is a need for mercy now. In relation to the people one should not rely on the sword, it is necessary to save the people from violence and oppression. People are like a broad river: if it comes out of the coast, it spares neither the royal palace nor the poor man's hut. In addition, if its fire sparks and burns both the grass and the sky will be damaged... So we have to do good deeds. If the country and people are happy – the power will be safe.

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The sultan did not hesitate any longer, but he did not dare to act contrary to some beks and advisers; on the other hand, the bad prevailing military situation dictated the need for rapid suppression of the rebellion in the heart of the state – Herat. Husayn Boyqaro finally decided:

– We have accepted your ideas completely. We instruct you to perform this delicate matter. By the will of Allah, an experienced and resourceful man like you will soon restore peace and tranquility in our capital. We will let you immediately begin preparations for the journey.

Navoiy, as usual, did not object as it was useful for both the people and the country. He just bowed in assent, and asked:

– What kind of gift will I bring the poor long-suffering residents of the capital? What medicine will cure them?

– The whole world knows that I am the emperor but not a doctor, – answered Husayn Boyqaro making a joke.

Navoiy loved funny witty speeches. He could answer eloquently to the sultan, but this time he just smiled and continued in a serious voice:

– When your servant will arrive in the capital, he should please the townspeople with something. I would like you to give me your decree.

– What should I write there? – asked the Emperor.

– The decree should be like the sun for the people – said Navoiy. – Each word of this decree shall be like the sea of justice! It should promise that the heads of cruel, hypocritical officials looting people's wealth will be hailed with stones.

Husayn Boyqaro did not answer he just smiled slyly. Then he spoke about other matters that should be fulfilled in Herat. When the poet rose to go, the Sultan said:

– Get ready for the journey. We will soon draw up and hand you the decree.

Navoiy walked slowly toward his tent. He took off his coat and tried to relax for a moment. But now his whole soul was in Herat and his mind was occupied by various thoughts and plans.

A servant brought food from the common pot. After eating some meat, the poet put aside the dish. Instead of sorbet he demanded a cup of cold buttermilk. Then he gathered chess pieces scattered on the carpet. He really wanted to invite someone from the players who lived in the neighboring tents, but he was afraid to get excited about the game and be late for the journey. He picked up the rustling sheets of white colored paper lying on the table littered with books, and he put them in a small, ornamented ivory box. They were ghazals, muammas and tuyuqs composed during the march but they had not been rewritten in a good paper yet.



All preparations for the journey were finished. Having read the decree by the Sultan the poet was satisfied with its content. He turned the paper into a tube, sealed it and put it on top of the folds of his turban. Servants brought to the tent slender pacer. Companions of the poet were ready too. There was Boboali among them who was his trusty nuker, a powerfully built, intelligent, polite young man, Navoiy got onto the saddle covered with a velvet carpet and the horse started wagging its head easily. Boboali and some other palace servants and officials followed him.

The poet loved to ride and enjoy the quiet fields. Sometimes he would even compose some ghazals on the way. A gentle blue haze of fog, mountains, dim shadows of trees would ignite the poet's talent.

Navoiy carefully surveyed the crops and gardens. He looked at herds of goats, which jumped at dizzying cliffs and mountain peaks. He admired the tents of nomads, noticing features of simple prairie life and talked to his companions about their language, way of life and customs.

Navoiy noticed some traces of drawings on a huge rock, which proudly rose from the banks of the river, he got off his horse. He looked up and down the cliff and made sure that those drawings that were almost erased depicted an armed man. Navoiy called his companions, told them that this figure has remained since Iskandar Zulqarnayn's times, and spoke about the importance of historical monuments. A storm of thoughts arose in Navoiy about the eternal flow of time, the brevity of earthly life, the spark of life like lightning fading in eternity, the meaning and the mystery of being. The poet sadly took his eyes off the cliff and kept silent surrendered by his thoughts. Only when the travelers stopped in one of the caravansarays to feed the horses and to relax a little bit he started to



speak again. In a circle of his companions he started talking about the need to improve roads and construction of new caravansarays. After dinner, Navoiy read many muammas by him and his friends and asked to unravel the hidden names in them. His companions told various jokes some time.

When Navoiy arrived in Herat the news that the poet had brought a special decree spread in the city like lightning. Everybody was eager to hear it as soon as possible. Although it seemed that the usual calm life reigned in Herat the wrath of the people was not cool yet... Every minute the mutiny was ready to break out again, even more menacing than before.

The poet came to the chancellery. He studied all the events thoroughly. He revoked the tax imposed by Khodja Abdullah and other officials. He dismissed the officials responsible for the crimes. Then he started to receive the poor with petitions in hands crowded at the door of the chancellery. Whoever that may be whether he was an old man, a young man, a woman, Tajik, Uzbek, Navoiy listened to each of them patiently. He inquired about the affairs of the complainants, comforted them and settled their disputes. The people received by the poet went out soothed.

There were ordinary people everywhere: on a wide flat yard, on minarets, on the roofs of the buildings surrounded on all sides by the mosque and the khanakah of a large mosque in Herat, which had painted aivans, were thick pillars. Even the tramps – muhtasibs who usually neglected prayers, somehow they had wound their turbans on their heads and came to the mosque today.

Navoiy slowly, majestically rose to high minbar¹ after the prayer. Everyone stood up immediately. No one said a word; all eyes were on the poet. Standing

¹ Pedestal for making speeches



on the minbar Navoiy scanned the crowd with a single thought. The poet understood the deep feelings of the people. Keeping the decree in his hands the poet read it trembling and slightly raising his voice. The people expressed their feelings close to their hearts and cried: "Either true!" or "God grant," "Curse of the villains!".

The content of the decree was passed from mouth to mouth. Instantly it became known to the back row and even to those who were on the rooftops. The poet, worrying, made a brief deeply felt speech. When he had finished thousands of rough, powerful palms of farmers, green hands of painters, thin and bony fingers of the other handicraftsmen rose into the air. Prayers and blessings said towards the poet echoed in the high arches of the mosque...

The people went out on the street joyfully. After that the poet remained in the mosque to talk to the scientists and great mudarrises about the situation in madrassahs and students. Avoiding any worship, Navoiy returned to the chancellery alone. Here he made a long list of officials and the vexed to offend people deciding to punish each of them according to their guilt and transgression.

The whole Herat talked only about the poet.

Navoiy completed this work and returned to the camp of Husayn Boyqaro and told him that he had established peace in the capital and the king wanted to go back to Herat as soon as possible. But after the first defeat of Mirza Yodgor he again assembled a large force and conquered Astrabad. Now he was about to conquer Herat. His troops were operating around the city secretly. Husayn Boyqaro was alarmed. Navoiy advised him to return to Herat and to gather new warriors there and finally deal with the rebels as soon as possible. So Husayn Boyqaro hastened to go back to the capital with his troops.

The events unfolded with a speed of lightning.

Husayn Boyqaro walked day and night. He stopped in one or two rabot's from the capital. The sultan expected that the honoured people of Herat would give him a grand welcome, according to custom, but the capital seemed like it had no idea of his return. Herat was deaf and cold. The Sultan got pale. The troops started to gossip about it. The men sent to find out what was going on came back in dismay. They reported that the road to the capital had been closed and that the beks and commanders of the fortress had taken Mirza Yodgor's side. Excitement and confusion in the army intensified again.

Navoiy went into the tent of the Sultan. He tried to calm the Sultan down.

– What a betrayal! – Husayn Boyqaro said sadly shaking his head. – Treacherous ungrateful people shut the gates of the fortress in front of my face!

– The deceiver will fall himself into the pit which he had dug for someone, – Navoiy said with conviction. – Do not lose your faith and bravery. Of course, it is extremely complicated, but you can overcome any difficulty if you act decisively and confidently. We need only look after the troops. Try not to spoil relations with the troops. Be always in concert with them; the Sultan who breaks up with his troops will face failure!

– What do you think we need to do now? – Husayn Boyqaro asked looking thoughtfully at the poet.

– Now you must get out of here, – replied Navoiy without any hesitation. – There are many faithful people in the capital. With their help you will find out everything about the situation in the city. When the right moment comes you will take a decisive action to end the enemy...

¹ Rabot-old name for the word "city"



Husayn Boyqaro silently thought with his half closed eyes. He wiped his forehead covered with cold sweat. Then with a sigh, he climbed on shakily and ordered beks to get on the horses. He travelled day and night and came to the area called Sartoq Ulanga.

Here he found out that the rebellion was rising gradually by Sultan Mahmud near Balkh. Husayn Boyqaro was caught between two fires in his own realm. Now he was supposed to kill both enemies who were threatening his throne. But he is scared of meeting with the enemy in open battle. Not seeing a safe place, Husayn, like a bird without a nest, wandered around the country. He moved to the Saqilmoq Dasht from Sartoq Ulangi. There, he lost some of his warriors and came to Naratau. He expected to hold the reliable fortress called Ogrug in his hands, but soon it became clear that it was impossible to count on it. Finally, Husayn stopped in Maimana Fortress.

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CHAPTER VI

Mirza Yodgor's supporters conducted their affairs very agilely. One of the respected queens – Poyonda Sultanbegim, on Emir Farididdin Barlos's advice moved from his suburban house to Herat. Bribing prominent people of the capital such as beks and officials she announced her nephew as the sultan of Khorasan. On the ramparts solemn music was played. She even ordered to mention the name of Mirza Yodgor in hutba¹. Yodgor Mirza who was in Tus region swiftly moved to Herat.

People, who are battered by the sovereigns of good and used to frequent change of rulers, treated these events with indifference. As for the beks and noble citizens of Herat, they looked favorably on the young

¹ prayer

sultan and had been eagerly waiting for his arrival, counting on new assignments and allotments of land. Finally, overdressed in silk and velvet, they got on their thoroughbred horses to welcome Mirza Yodgor. Bowing nine times they kissed the young prince's robe. According to Mirza Yodgor's respectful people it was not a favorable time to enter the capital so he decided to stay here for a night. The next day he entered the capital with great treatment and celebration and settled down in Bogi Zogon.

Mirza Yodgor knew nothing about the administration of the state and he did not even try to learn anything. The careless prince did not think of what he was going to do in future; he did not worry about his enemy Husayn Boyqaro and his intentions. The Bogi Zogon was filled with beautiful girls, feasting and binge drinking.

Poyanda Sultanbegim ran the affairs of the state. Acting vigorously in favor of his nephew, of course, she tried to raise her own prestige in the country. She managed to achieve her goal. She became famous as a reasonable business woman. Aloiddin and some other poets wrote odes in her honour. However, Poyanda Sultanbegim was not able to break the pride and willfulness of Turkmen warlords. On the contrary, she had to get along with them because the military power was in their hands. They brought Mirza Yodgor to the state and they were supposed to protect him from his rivals. Turkmen commanders started to abuse their occupations. Excesses started in Herat and its suburbs. People were exposed to violence and harassment.

In these troubled days Sul-tonmurod almost did not go outside the madrassah at all. Behind the high stone walls of madrassah which was like an impregnable fortress he spent his days and nights reading in



his cramped, dimly lit hujra. Sometimes Zayniddin would bring him the latest news and listening to him, the young scientist would curse the rebels who violated the peace of the country.

One evening on the third day after Mirzo Yodgor's formal entry into the capital Sul-tonmu-rod was sadly sitting alone at a flickering candle. The silence reigned everywhere. The students had gone to the celebration in honour of the young prince.

Aloiddin Mashhadiy entered the room with his half-closed eyes. He offered Sul-tonmu-rod to go with him to Togonbek's place. Sul-tonmu-rod refused it saying that he could not break away from his studies.

– I have seen people in our city who have read so many books and they have gone crazy, – said Aloiddin with displeasure. – It is madness to lose your mind, being eager to develop your mind. Come on, let us go.

– The books are my consolation, – replied Sul-tonmu-rod sadly. – I probably would have gone mad from all that is happening in the country without them.

– There is nothing to grieve. Life is an old chameleon. Try to spend the day with fun. Togonbek will certainly entertain us. Nowadays his star has risen high...

– How come? – asked Sul-tonmu-rod interestedly.

– Don't you know? Togonbek is one of the heroes of Mirza Yodgor's time! – said Aloiddin Mashhadiy proudly.

Sul-tonmu-rod wanted to know the details of the latest news. Without a doubt that Navoiy was on Husayn Boyqaro's side he was particularly interested in the current situation of the former Sultan. He decided to talk to Togonbek and find out some information about Navoiy, so he suddenly stood up surprising Aloiddin Mashhadiy.

– Let's go and have some fun!

The streets were dark and empty. Despite the early evening people were passing occasionally... Only some warriors on horse would pass like a gloomy whirlwind.

Sultonmurod had to go very slowly as Aloiddin Mashhadiy told him to do so. At the gates of the house they were met by the old slave- Nurbobo. He said that Togonbek had not returned home since yesterday. Sultonmurod turned to leave, but Aloiddin Mashhadiy grabbed his arm and asked the slave to open the sitting room:

– Let's get some rest, maybe Togonbek will come back, – he said. Nurbobo unlocked the door, lit a candle and led the young people into the house. They opened the window. Freshness of the evening burst into the stuffy room. Sultonmurod frowned being sorry for coming. Aloiddin Mashhadiy talked about poetry and poets. He tried to refute the view of Navoiy about the richness and beauty of the Turkic language. This annoyed Sultonmurod more. He had to speak in order to stop this chatterbox. It was very easy for him to prove that nine out of ten contemporary poets writing in Persian of Herat were pathetic rhymers, and the rest were weak imitators of the great ancient poets. Aloiddin Mashhadiy, as usual, said a few poisonous words then closed his eyes and kept silent. When Nurbobo spread out tablecloth and brought some fruits, the poet got excited a little bit. Continuously clicking almonds and pistachios, he praised the nature and the air of Badgis. Sultonmurod offered Aloiddin to go when the tablecloth was taken away. Suddenly, stamping horses were heard from the gate. Delighted Aloiddin asked Sultonmurod to sit down again. Togonbek entered the room. His eyes gleamed drunkenly. Seeing his guests, he was delighted and immediately ordered Nurbobo to bring food and drink. He filled



the cups to the brim and handed them to the guests. Aloiddin Mashhadiy got drunk from the first cup and began to chatter incoherently. After the second one, he fumbled in his pocket and took out a long ode for Poyanda Sultanbegim and began to read it aloud. Then he asked Togonbek to give it to the "Treasure of the era" who was Poyanda Sultanbegim.

- What do you think about the mind and the insights of this woman? - Sul-tonmurod asked Togonbek.

- Everyone thinks that she is a treasure trove of intelligence, - Togonbek replied with a sly smile. - She is amazingly beautiful, but I still did not notice even a feature of intelligence in her!

Aloiddin Mashhadiy started to object, but Togonbek did not even want to answer him and started to talk about something else. Sul-tonmurod asked him what occupation he was holding now and about the position of Husayn Boyqaro. Togonbek replied succinctly about his job: "I am beside the young princess" - and about the situation with Husayn Boyqaro he said that it was very complicated and his horsemen were scampering to Mirza Yodgor. In conclusion, he said with conviction:

- But Husayn has got Alisher Navoiy. Mirza Yodgor should be afraid of this man more!

- What an exaggeration! - Aloiddin Mashhadiy got angry. - Alisher is a very humble man. You do not know him.

- No, Navoiy is a great power: he's a great politician. This is a man of great intelligence and people respect him very much. You are right, I do not know him. Maybe I have even to hide from him. But "the art of weaving can be seen on the fabric made by the weaver"; a person can be recognized by his deeds. If there is no taste in your odes, no one will call you a poet.

Sultonmurod nodded as a confirmation of Togonbek's words. We hope, – he said, – that Navoiy soon rids the country of the dangers and disasters!

Togonbek grimly looked down.

– The country is not in danger, – he said slowly. – There is Timur's blood in the veins of Mirza Yodgor too. He demanded his rights only!

Assuming that it was unnecessary to argue with Togonbek, Sultonmurod kept silent. Togonbek was drunk. Aloiddin drank a few more cups than Togonbek and eventually stretched out on the floor. Sultonmurod was drunk too. He stood up intending to leave Aloiddin there. Togonbek went to see him off up to the gate. The large, tree-lined courtyard was asleep peacefully in the moonlight.

– Nurbobo, bring a candle! – shouted Togonbek.

– No need – said Sultonmurod.

– Do not hurry, you still have got time to return to your hujra. Please go to the beauty and show your appreciation, first!

Sultonmurod understood nothing he just followed Togonbek. The old man brought a candle. Togonbek opened the door of one of the houses that stood behind a number of the trees, and said:

– Please, come in!

Sultonmurod saw the girl sitting in front of a locked window whose head was bowed, "Perfect, perfect beauty" – thought Sultonmurod and got somewhat embarrassed. Togonbek looked at the dish, which stood on the shelf and approached the girl:

– Dildorhon, – he said softly, leaning slightly over her, – why didn't you eat anything? Should I order something else?

– Something to eat?! You had better bring me some poison, poison! – she cried bitterly and straightened.



– Nurbobo, holding the candle in his trembling hands, began to speak:

– Pray to Allah, my daughter. He is the one who can solve your problems.

Togonbek proudly approached and whispered to Sul-tonmu-rod – Is she beautiful? Do you like her? Sul-tonmu-rod kept silent. He looked sympathetically at her and walked out. A minute later Togonbek came out after him.

– Who is she? – Sul-tonmu-rod asked thoughtfully.

– Last night I took her from the village – said Togonbek. – She has surprising elegance and beauty!..

– Aren't such cases a disaster for the country?

– My friend, stop these talks! Stealing a woman is a very pleasant affair. It is midnight. She is sleeping on the supa¹ with hair spread over the pillow. Her old grandmother is snoring next to her... I approached her on my tiptoe with two guys. First of all, I kissed her lightly on her forehead. Then we tied her mouth, lifted her up and we ran away. We easily jumped over the wall like stealing a flower in a garden: We threw her on our horses and rushed at full speed. It is a very nice deal! In the morning we came to the town, had a rest in the garden of my friend and now we have brought her here. There is a special pleasure in all these things...

– Why have you done it? She is unhappy. Can there be anything worse for her parents? – Sul-tonmu-rod spoke in a trembling voice.

– To play with love, you need mutual desire in it. I know it very well, – calmly and seriously said Togonbek. – If she does not want I will not touch her. She will just live at my Khodja's place; in essence, this girl could be a decoration of the Sultan's palace!

– No, send her to her family. A person should not serve as a toy for fleeting desire.

¹ Bed



– All right, I will think about it. Goodbye... – said Togonbek and went away.

Sultonmurod stood looking at the closed door for a long time. Then he went home sadly. The town was asleep. In the calm moonlit night the Herat mosque still seemed huge and the Fortress Ikhtiyoriddin looked even more threatening than usual. Sultonmurod, full of hatred towards Togonbek and rapists in the world, walked along the streets, not noticing anything around him. In his khujra he did not light candles; he somehow got his bed ready and slept. He could not sleep, he thought about Dildor all the time. He felt a sweet pain in his breasts. Silently moving his lips he repeated the following verses several times:

*Chashm agar inastu abru inu nozu ishva in,
Alvido, ey aqlo donish, alvido ey ilmu din¹.*

CHAPTER VII

Husayn Boyqaro languished in the large garden Chahor of the town Maimana. There weren't any royal receptions or lush, noisy feasts there. The Sultan mostly would sit alone in a spacious, decorated with faded painted house and he would not even write a poetry. Can the governor, who lost his power, write about some girls with eyebrows like a bow and beautiful eyes? Lust for power soaked into him with his mother's milk. Husayn Boyqaro felt now sharper and more painful than ever the power of pain and sorrow. He could hear the sound of noise and shouting of his warriors who had forgotten about their duties, who fought to have at least something fun in a remote

¹ Meaning: If someone has got such beautiful eyes and eyebrows and beauty. In that case we should say goodbye to science and to our minds (Kamol Khojandiy)



corner of the garden. Husayn Boyqaro sighed heavily, he was waiting for someone impatiently. Eshikoga entered and reported:

– He has come. Will you allow him to enter? – he asked bowing.

Husayn Boyqaro nodded as a sign of agreement. Navoiy entered and bowed as usual. The Emperor quickly showed him the place beside him and immediately said:

– I've got one idea. First of all, I wanted to listen to you. I know that these sad events have disturbed you more than others.

– Thank you for your attention. I came here to hear good news from your Majesty, – said Navoiy.

Although the room was empty, Husayn Boyqaro lowered his voice and spoke about the news that he learned through his informants. According to them the situation with Mirzo Yodgor was fragile. Navoiy asked:

– To what solution have you come?

– The difficulty is to make a decision, actually... – Husayn Boyqaro kept silent for a moment, then continued, – if we go by our current warriors to the capital and suddenly, like lightning, attack Yodgorbek, what do you think, we will reach our goal?

The poet did not rush to answer. He screwed up his eyes, suddenly his face was lit up with a subtle smile. Then he said very gravely:

– If you just had not expressed this idea to me, it would have been even better!

Husayn Boyqaro thought that Navoiy did not like his idea so he asked immediately:

– Why? – anxiously asked Husayn Boyqaro.

Navoiy could not help laughing.

– No, this plan should be kept in great secrecy. – he said seriously.

Husayn Boyqaro also smiled, and then he shook his head as he spoke like an objecting person:

– It is impossible not to consult with military people!

– Of course. Nothing can be done without them, – seriously said Navoiy. – But we must protect ourselves from one danger: someone can tell the enemy about this plan, then Mirza Yodgor and his beks and emirs will wake up from a carefree sleep. We must act decisively and quickly. Mirahur lives in Herat. Let him gather the necessary information. Then, when the day of the attack will be determined, you will reveal the secret to the military commanders.

– I have no doubts about your view and I understand that you support me in this matter? – he said and looked at Navoiy.

– For the sake of your winning, your humble servant will make all possible efforts. Let Allah praise the people of the country with peace and quiet life! – said Navoiy.

– Amen! – Husayn Boyqaro stroked his beard.

Secret preparations were conducted for implementation of the plan for some time. Then, quite unexpectedly, the troops marched out of Maimana to Murghab. In area of Togkun, Husayn Boyqaro made a great reception as reminiscent of bygone days of his fame and power. He affably met the beks and then he invited them to discuss the plan. Even though some people did not dare to speak definitely, some beks among the troops discussed it with a great pleasure. After that Husayn Boyqaro started his way with his soldiers under the secret march. In the area of Pilpoyon Muhammad Arlat, Emir Sarban and some other influential noblemen joined him. Husayn Boyqaro led eight hundred fifty warriors and moved along the shore of the Murghab making referrals day and night. According to the words of the famous historian of that time, it's



said: "Each of Sultan Husayn Boyqaro's nukers tore the veil of the moon with the tips of their swords!" By morning, the troops made a halt and after short rest they went along the Bobo Hoki Road.

A famous dervish named Baba Khaki lived in those places in a mountain cave. From an **early** age he brushed off the dust from the floors of world's affairs and indulged in his stone house away from people. Husayn Boyqaro found it necessary to receive his blessing in these difficult days. The Sultan feared that Baba Khaki would follow his usual manner and not receive him, but this fear turned out to be in vain. Hearing about the Sultan, he avoided his usual habit and went out to meet him.

Husayn Boyqaro dismounted and bowed, and then he came to the dervish and kissed his little withered hand. Baba Khaki invited the sultan to his dwelling. Although Sultan cherished every minute of his life then and not daring to contradict the dervish, he accepted his offer with pleasure. Baba Khaki who was about eighty and dry as Chillaki, short and narrow-chested he was still very cheerful.

Shaking like a goat he quickly walked among huge stones, showing the way to Husayn.

Rocks were hanging on the ceiling of the cave as if ready to break. The cave had no utensils, but three or four mats. Cracked stone walls had been blackened by soot. An old and worn cow skin rug was on the ground and a blanket in a corner was sticking out of wool.

The weather in the area was very pleasant. A cool wind blew in passing under the arches and ruffled scattered pearl droplets of water sparkling in the huge stones with silver sequins in the cave. As ridge of rocks, wide valleys, wavy lines of hills and hillsides could be seen in the pale blue distance. They were prompting vague, sweet hope.

The sovereign wanted to occupy the heart of the dervish. He humbly sat on his litter. Husayn Boyqaro now pretended like dervish but his entire thoughts were occupied by the power, thirst for life dive into the vast sea of pleasure. He spoke about the holy life of the poor removed from people and about the troubles and hardships of earthly existence. The dervish noticed the purity of Sultan's words. Baba Khaki spoke about the greatness of "His Majesty". Then he spread out before the sovereign a piece of dirty calico, broke stale bread and filled to the brim clay cup with sour milk from a strange colored bottle. Two servants who accompanied the sultan, but stood at the entrance of the cave, were also given a cup of sour milk each. Husayn Boyqaro lifted the cup with unfeigned pleasure to drink milk. The dervish sat at the entrance to the cave and vaguely muttered:

- Though this house is as dark as my sinful heart, I still prefer it to king's golden palaces. Here I talk to the birds and grief stones. Oh, my Allah! Spring flows did not captivate me with the help of the sea of your mercy. Winter storms did not return me to your primal breaking rusty chain... At last! Husayn waited until the dervish had finished speaking, then he asked for permission to go. Baba Khaki rose, stretched out his arms and turned to face the direction of Mecca and started to pray. The Sultan also stood up and he stretched his arms and bowed his head.

After the pray the old man made a sign to the Sultan to wait a little. He pulled out an old spear with a rusty end out of a heap of brushwood and went out of the cave. He swung it towards Herat with his flashing eyes like a warrior as if hitting the enemy. Then he handed the spear to Sultan Husayn. All this made a strong impression on the sovereign. He barely held back his tears and put a bony hand of the dervish to his lips.



Having started galloping their horses, Husayn Boyqaro and his servants returned to the army. He told his impressions to some beks with great pleasure. Clutching the dervish's spear like the most precious thing in the world, Sultan Husayn went to Herat. By midnight, he had already reached the region called Juzduq Chashma, near Herat and made a camp there. The waning moon in the sky, as if being eager to emphasize the wretched huts of the dilapidated village, started to get lighter. Sometimes dogs' barking was heard from the distance.

The Sovereign's heart was restless since it got dark. Here, before Herat, his crown was again captured by the anxiety and doubt. What will happen? And what if the enemy is aware of everything and will guard the city with his troops? Will he be ashamed again? These thoughts did not leave him even for a second. He got excited. The warriors wore armor and were preparing for the battle.

Navoiy on horseback rode up to the sultan. He advised him to send some people and get some informants from the city. He looked exhausted, but the poet sounded confident. Husayn called Shirim Guardian. He was clever guardian. He considered himself as Mehtarbod Yaldo¹. Taking two agile fellows with him, in a moment he disappeared in the darkness. The soldiers were ready for the fight and they were just waiting for the order. It seemed that it would get dawn soon. Horses were tired, the people were worried. The guard returned leading some drunken warrior. He was one of Mirza Yodgor's people. The beks tried to get some significant information from this frightened to death man.

Shirim said that gross carelessness was in Herat. Husayn Boyqaro immediately picked one hundred

¹ A mythical spy in ancient novels



people and sent to Muzaffar Barlos, Ibrahim Barlos and Dervish Arlot and ordered them to open the big gate of Bogi Zagon. Then he appointed some people to get other informants. Making sure that there was not any sound from the side of Herat, Sultan Husayn with the rest of the army, moved forward. Passing the Hi-yaban Street and reaching the grave of Imam Fakhri, Husayn sent Sultan Khodja Uzbek and his horsemen to surround the Gate of Bogi Zagon which was right next to the Madrassah Gavharshodbegim. Then he sent some small detachments of warriors to other gates. Sultan Husayn remained with about eighty soldiers. He moved to the gate where Muzaffar Barlos was. He hurried to meet Mirahur, his faithful follower and who was in the camp of the enemy all this time. Mirahur reported that the gate had been broken and it was possible to penetrate into the garden. Husayn Boyqaro with a lighter heart drove his horse and rode straight into the Bogi Zogon. Sultan Husain's warriors began to silently scour the garden searching for enemy soldiers in the groves and avenues in the darkness, but they all were gone. Then Husayn Boyqaro with a small group entered the Bogi Shimol – the night and stay place of Mirza Yodgor. Some suddenly awakened warriors did not even try to resist. They all kept complete silence.

The horsemen were looking for the prince. Here is a magnificent palace, like a fortress. There was a tent near it. The tent was empty... Husayn Boyqaro ordered soldiers to surround the high hill. He supposed that Mirza Yodgor might be behind the hill. To enter it one had to go up the hill. Everybody thought that they were supposed to do so. Perhaps the enemy had taken refuge under the protection of a hill with a large force preparing for the final decisive battle. Ominous



silence of the palace in the darkness, outlines of the hill – all seemed to be full of threats...

Consumed with impatience, Husayn ordered several armored soldiers go up to the hill and invade it, but no one moved. Then they looked at each other as if they did not understand the order. Then Alisher quickly dismounted, handed the reins to his warrior Boboali and came to the sovereign and said: – Let me do it! Neither beks nor the warriors expected this from Navoiy. Many of the warriors lowered their heads with shame. But now it was too late to prove their mettle...

Husayn Boyqaro looked at the soldiers standing around with a grim look and after some hesitation he nodded to the poet as a sign of agreement. Navoiy (it was the first time in his life he drew his sword from its sheath and for the last time as well!) boldly moved to the hill, but he moved towards the hill from the other way. Someone lit a bundle of candles and raised high overhead. All eyes were on the poet, who was getting slowly up to the hill. When Navoiy almost disappeared from the sight of others his warrior Boboali, drawing his sword, followed him. Immediately dozens of guys ran quickly up to the hill along the road chosen by the poet.

Leaning on his sword as a stick, Navoiy descended from the sloping hill gently. Several armed warriors ran after him. One of them shouted angrily: – Who is that? The remaining people raised swords preparing to attack. Navoiy, without lifting his sword but ready to parry the blow, stopped and said imperiously: put your swords down! Surrender immediately! Another warrior came closer, stretched his neck and gazed at Navoiy and asked: "Who are you? Why should we give up?" "I am Alisher Navoiy!" – the poet said quietly, turning abruptly he went to the palace. Stunned

warriors did not try to stop him. Trying to find his way in the dark hall, Navoiy reached the door and he was followed by Babaali. He noiselessly opened the door; they entered one after another. There were soft velvet carpets and some people were lying in different poses under the blankets in the middle of the large room. Beneath the window on a white mattress a young woman with flowing hair was quietly sleeping. Navoiy, leaning over the sleeping people, said softly:

– Take this one! Babaali crunched shards of bowls and pitchers. Grabbing the prince's hands, he pulled and made him wake up. Two warriors who slept jumped up. The room was filled with noise. The young woman with a cry of "Oh!" jumped out the window. Mirza Yodgor was twisted in iron hands of Babaali and breathlessly muttered some nonsense. The front room was filled with soldiers. Navoiy, commanding to take Mirza Yodgor out, sneered after him:

Shoh mastu jahon harobu dushman pasu pesh'.

The horsemen took Mirza Yodgor by dragging him down the hill and brought him to Husayn Boyqaro. The young man in royal robes was not yet sober after yesterday's binge. He was thrown at the feet of the horse of Husayn Boyqaro. Finally, realizing what had happened to him, he struggled to get on his feet and trembling with fear he stared at his enemy. Husayn Boyqaro threw a few angry words at his prisoner and gave a gesture to his warriors to take him away.

Herat was awakened by the sounds of karnays and surnays. Mirza Yodgor was beheaded. His adherents, trembling for their lives, hid in their burrows...

¹ Meaning: If a king is drunk, the world will ruin and enemy will surround him.



CHAPTER VIII

Togonbek, grim and sullen, was sitting in his well-furnished room, not daring to appear on the street. His pride would not let him face his owner and confess and repent of treason. Could he think that the bright sun of Mirza Yodgor faded so fast?! He scolded "stupid daubed!" Poyanda Sultanbegim and he also cursed Turkmen beks who overlooked offensive Husayn Boyqaro. His plan was to behead the Turkmen chiefs and intimidating Mirza Yodgor, assign himself as a chief vizier. Now he bitterly regretted not having escaped from Herat with Toqli mergan in the midst of turmoil and confusion, and though he had built all sorts of plans to escape to distant lands, his heart could not break away from Herat life and he tried to find some difficulty or disadvantage in his plans.

Feeling suffocating in the expanse of room Togonbek sharply opened both sashes of the window. Yellow silk sunlight poured into the room. Togonbek noisily spat out the window and stood up to see Dildor. At this time the door was opened and the sad face of Nurbobo with a white beard and gentle build appeared, as usual. Togonbek looked questioningly at him. The old man reported that the Khodja was calling Togonbek and disappeared. Togonbek for some time grimly wondered then reluctantly got up and left.

Majididdin received him in his guest room. Togonbek respectfully shook his hands and sat at a distance. Majididdin began to reprimand him for his evil deeds. Togonbek, staring at one point, listened to him keeping silent. Finally, the host clicking his slender fingers, stopped talking. Togonbek said slowly:

- I did not do anything that could be worth saying. Residents of Herat turn out to exaggerate!

– Well, how did you escape from Alisher Navoiy? People complain about you as well. Someone told me about it.

– I earnestly tried to serve you. This is my habit – I do not like to do anything halfway. Those who gave money without talking, God knows, I did not say a word. Well, if the words did not work, I indulged in a whip. You know that when you're dealing with people, you can't do anything without lashes, but be sure, sir, your name remained untarnished. I worked as a trusted of Abdulziyo. Your Navoiy listened to all the gossip and raised a big mess here. Oh! Though he is called a poet he makes strict actions... I marvel at this man! But I will not give up. I wrapped up in my old coat and sat in a tavern day and night. Let them try to find Togonbek then!

Majididdin did not like the high evaluation of the poet. He, turning away his face, muttered irritably:


– Navoiy wanted to raise himself in the eyes of the people. The meaning of this policy is clear to us.

– You want to say that there is something else under the love towards the people. Yes, he has got an ulterior motive – Togonbek replied with a sly glance at his Khodja.

– Togonbek, if you want to become a big man, be careful, watch your every step – peaceably said Majididdin. – For me to part with such a fine fellow and a hero like you is a big disappointment. If you hold on to my robe I'll be able to transfer you through Pulisyrat¹. Now, you have to go out of the city to some other regions for about two months until everything will be all right again. Let the past events be forgotten. You have to watch your tongue in conversations. That's all.

¹ According to Islam Religion it is a bridge which will be constructed on the day of reckoning





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Togonbek thanked him, but his dark mood did not dissipate. After all, Majididdin spoke only about the wrong tax collection and promised him protection from Navoiy. This one, as compared with the other bad deeds, seemed to Togonbek not so significant. For some sins he could have gotten away with paying a fine, and nothing more, but his participation in the rebellion by Mirza Yodgor was another matter! A few glorious days of Togonbek could be paid with his head or he was supposed to rot like a blind mouse in a dirty prison pit for many years! Togonbek did not dare to admit to Majididdin about this violation. "This man is a faithful servant of Husayn Boyqaro - he thought. - he would arrest me and give him to the executioner or at best, throw me into the street to prove his honesty in front of the king. He said: "If you are a master of something you can cross the sea of danger and rescue yourself; if you are not, in that case you will go down!.."

At this moment Togonbek dreamed of jumping on a horse, waving his whip and running somewhere like Iraq, Azerbaijan, Dashti Kipchak or China. But he was used to living in Herat. And that's why he did not want to leave it if someone did not offer him a bigger job. He sat silently hoping that Majididdin himself would talk about mutiny, but he started asking him about taxes. Togonbek slowly told him how much money had been received, how much remained in the distant regions, and added that he handed the money to Abulziyo according to the order of Majididdin. "Perfect!, - said Majididdin rubbing his hands. - If I had had seven fellows like you, I would have won all seven sides of the earth! Inshallah, we'll commit many more glorious deeds with you in the future. Togonbek's eyes glistened and said

– Sir, – he said, slyly squinting, – your ignorant servant has committed one offense but I do not dare to say it to you...

– There is no day without a night; there is no tulip without stains. What's the matter? – Majididdin asked.

– There is a rumor spread among people, – Togonbek spoke in a low voice, – that the Sultan Husayn, deprived his troops and fled with a handful of young men to India in order not to fall into the enemy's hands...and all his beks and emirs allegedly swore to Mirza Yodgor... I'm simple-minded and believing these tales I entered the service of Mirza Yodgor. Five or ten days, we rode on horseback and shouted with laughter. At the end it turned out that this was bullshit... -Togonbek sidelong glanced at Majididdin. In the eyes of the host he saw no anger but great concern.

– Oh my boy, can there be anything more shameful than that?! – severely said Majididdin.

– Sir, I have made a terrible mistake. But believe me, God is my witness, I did not forget you even for a moment... I had my calculations, but what could I do, I had no luck?

Majididdin immediately understood the meaning of these words, but frowning he said with an angry voice:

– What does this mean? The whole world knows that I am a faithful dog of the king! Until my death, I would like to serve His Majesty the Sultan and high family. Do not try to repeat anything like that again!

Togonbek immediately lost all his hope. Today or tomorrow he thought he would have to wear his old coat and run away somewhere far away. No other choice. For some time he was silent plucking his mustache. Then he stood up and said gloomily to know what was going on in Majididdin's heart:



– No more bread to share with me in Khorasan!...
– Sit down! Do you want to escape? – Majididdin looked at him ironically with a smile.

Togonbek again slumped to the floor and said:

– If God will give strength to the hooves of my horse I will find a permanent peaceful place for myself.

– Maybe, there is no need to be excited, – said Majididdin. – In the city there are other people who supported Mirza Yodgor and helped him. They had dinners with him... I have told you: stay far away from people for a while. Everywhere expressively declare your devotion to the sovereign. Then we will give you some post. You will perform your duties with good faith. What else do you need?!

Togonbek thanked heartily. Then rising from his seat, he said:

– I had a little gift for you.

Majididdin looked at him and said:

– Well, give it to me! During the reign of Mirza Yodgor many rare things had been stolen from the garden Bogi Zogon...

– My gift will come to you itself. – Togonbek smiled and left. He stopped at the door of a small room near the stable.

– Hey, where are you, lame crow, bring the key! – He shouted to Nurbobo.

Nurbobo came out of the stable and looked at Togonbek suspiciously, then he took a key from his belt and handed it to him. Togonbek hastily opened the door. From the far corner of the room Dildor's angry eyes flashed.

– Come here, gorgeous, let's make it up, – said Togonbek softly.

– Get out, do not come near to me, let trouble smite thee! – cried the girl, jumping up.

– Do not be angry, my dear, – said pleadingly Togonbek. – I did not touch you. I hear thousand of curses for my every good word. When you see me, you frown like an owl. If I give you pistachios, you throw them just like sheep's manure. Come on I'll get you out of this prison...

Togonbek grabbed Dildor by her arm and dragged her along. Old Nurbobo, choking with anger, shouted:

– You will break her hands! Do not get frightened, my daughter, – he said gently patting on her shoulder, – you are not in danger.

– Father! – Tearfully pleaded Dildor. – Tell me where this villain is taking me? I do not want to part with you, I am scared, my father!

– Believe me, my daughter, inshaallah, no one will hurt you.

Togonbek, then begging and threatening led the girl. At the door of the guest room he whispered in her ear:

– Now you will see a great vizier. Stop crying! If he does not say anything your head will be chopped off. Got it? Greet him politely!

Dildor's heart sank. Togonbek opened the door and pushed the girl into the room and she stopped with an air of indifference at the threshold. Making two or three steps Dildor sat on the soft carpet. She was ready to lie face down on the floor to hide her face burning with shame, but scared from the "great vizier", she tried to seize herself.

Majididdin raised his head and stood up. Like admiring a beautiful painting or a precious stone, he narrowed his eyes and stared at the girl. Then beckoned Togonbek and whispered to him:

– Here is a rare jewel of flower... But the price for it is probably unheard?

Togonbek shook his head smiling:



– Price? – he asked in a whisper. – Where can your servant get money? During MirzaYodgor's reign I had such long arms that I could get the moon from the sky, not only a simple girl. – He looked at the girl and Majididdin from time to time with pride.

– Such kinds of deeds should be stopped, my boy! – said Majididdin with fake order.

Dildor threw a quick glance at Majididdin. In her chest hope for salvation awakened. With deep supplication in her voice, trustfully Dildor spoke to him as to her father:

– You're a great man in the country. We are all your children. Let Allah send you happiness in this life and in the paradise. Send me to my family. I shall never forget your grace...

Tears streamed from her eyes.

– It's not my will, – said softly Majididdin. – Ask this fellow here. What good deeds have you found in your family? If you stay with us you will be happy. Each day of yours will be decorated with new flowers. Do not cry at all.

Dildor bowed her head and kept crying. Majididdin ordered Nurbobo to take the girl to the head of the servants. Togonbek took hold of her hand and she jumped in fright. Barely treading on her weakened legs, the girl followed Togonbek. Joyful and lively Majididdin rose hastily. Wearing a long, gold embroidered robe and winding his turban round his head, he went to the palace.

Bogi Zogon, as usual, lived with its royal life. The servants slowly, with stately serious faces were carrying out their duties. Warriors, armed with spears and swords, and a quiver full of arrows, slowly strolled back and forth. An old porter with a white beard, which covered his entire chest, leaning on his spear,



enthusiastically was telling his younger comrades about his past campaigns.

Having admired little with the new elephants brought from India, from far away country, Majididdin approached the palace with forty pillars. In the light gazebo surrounded by trees and flowering lawns, one of the famous scientists of Khorasan was teaching a lesson to two young princes. The boys, dressed in expensive Chinese silks, were looking forward to the end of the lesson maybe because they had been forced to listen to the singsong chant and strange words of the Koran too long. From time to time, the children looked at the same elegant children as themselves who flitted among the trees, shimmering like a rainbow or snow geese.

Going to the palace, Majididdin was convinced that neither sovereign nor courtiers were there. After wandering through the alleys he slowly climbed the hill. Behind the hill, on a wide flat area, Badiuzaman, the heir to the throne, the firstborn son of Husayn Boyqaro from his senior wife Beka Sul-tonbegim, was both playfully and seriously engaged in military exercises. Forty to fifty beautifully dressed young men, sons of beks and other notable people of Herat, participated in the game. Badiuzzamon, was a sleek, tall, well-built boy of twelve or thirteen, was dressed in a glittering gold and silver embroidered gown; camp intercepted his belt decorated with bright jewels at the waist dazzling colored lights shone a sheathed dagger. Over the prince's white silk turban lay a small crown with a gold rim; precious stones were artfully attached to the turban, on his legs were delicate colored boots... Badiuzzamon met his father only at official receptions. He had his own treasury, warriors, poets and interlocutors. He studied with the greatest



scholars of Herat, but did not show a strong preference. The young man loved music and poetry, and he sometimes wrote poems himself as well. He arranged magnificent receptions and meals. He was an expert in wines. Despite his young age, Badiuzzamon was able to arrange the royal celebration. Living in a world of pleasure and joy, the heir dreamed of the great day of his life, the day when, according to the custom of his fathers and grandfathers, he would sit upon white felt and wear a crown on his head.

Majididdin watched the game smiling contentedly. He thought of the nobles and the educators who surrounded the prince. He thought about an idea of strengthening relations with the king's sons and he came down from the hill. Seeing Husayn Boyqaro at a distance, who was walking in the flower garden surrounded, as usual, by interlocutors, Majididdin was excited and got pale a little bit. He hurriedly took fifteen or twenty steps and leaned in obeisance. Then with another bow he came closer and gave greetings to the Sultan from Mirzoyi Kichik. Husayn Boyqaro was in a good mood so he said: "Stay with us!" Although Majididdin felt the mocking looks of the present he bowed almost to the ground and humbly thanked him.

On a shady alley strewn with gold flecks dancing of sunlight, the Sultan went to the dovecote. Each of the attendants tried to think of any word or phrase that could please the sultan. Majididdin, who was conscious of his complete inability at witticisms, was silent, but he tried to express his loyalty to the sultan together with other people.

From the little room adjoined by the dove a handsome, old man came out bowing respectfully. As a child, the sultan often ran to this old man to fly pigeons and still kept his respectful love. Husayn Boyqaro sat in the shade of fruit trees on the edge of the supra-




ed with silk rug. The old man carried a large wooden bowl with millet and scattered it on the ground, and then he opened the doors of all three dovecotes. Dozens of birds flew noisily on the yard and rushed to pick up grain. Mottled, gray and white doves hurried eagerly to peck the millet. Husayn Boyqaro was happy as a child. He watched and listened to the stories of the old man about the pigeon and their habits.

When there was no millet any more, the old man made a strange sound and waved, with a little wobble, a long stick. The motley flock flew up into the air. Clapping, the man forced the birds to fly. Sultan Husayn, putting his hands behind his back and sticking out his broad chest, raised his head and looked at the sky; his eyes were on the aerial dance of the pigeons in the transparent hot sky. The Sovereign's lips whispered: "These birds in flight carry my heart" ... At this time, one of those present read in a loud voice about pigeons from "Mantiq ut tayr" (Conversation of birds) by Farididdin Attor. Husayn Boyqaro liked the line very much. Shaking his head, he repeated the line several times. The winged dancers descended from the heavenly scene and began to return to their homes. The king left the place rubbing his stiff neck. Servants reported that preparations for the feast were done. The junket, as usual, took place in the biggest building of Bogi Zogon.

In the center, on a pile of gold embroidered pillows, Husayn Boyqaro sat with his legs crossed. In a semi-circle handsome young men, dressed alike and almost the same age, sat beside him. They stayed in the palace to give greater splendor to the meetings of the sovereign. On the right and left of Husayn Boyqaro nobles related by kinship with the reigning house, and a few unlucky princes, who had taken shelter in the palace of the Sultan, were sitting. The beks, policymakers,





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other guests and drinking buddies took places which matched their positions. There were many scholars, poets, famous musicians and singers of Herat among those present. They all were often at similar parties and were aware of methods and behavior. It began, as usual, to enliven a little. Husayn introduced his new ghazal to those present. Khodja Abdullah Marvoriy, a government official, who could recite a poem beautifully and subtly, read it. Fans of both Turkic and Persian poetry erected the poem to the category of high artistic works in the Turkic language. Even people who had little understanding in poetry began to repeat certain lines and discuss them. Husayn asked the poets to explore the ghazal and write a reply to it. Then telling funny jokes began. The gathered laughed incessantly. Especially, the distinguished famous satirist and wit Abdulvose made everybody burst into laughter. His words and gestures amused the people until they dropped. After Abdulvose no other jokers dared to speak. Servants, running on their tiptoes, deftly spread a tablecloth. Roast goose, lamb, dumplings and other dishes were served. The personal servant of Husayn Boyqaro presented him meals in a special dish. The cupbearer, spreading golden goblets on silver trays, with a bow, offered guests some wine. Husayn Boyqaro first picked up a gold cup and gave a sign to the gathered people. All emptied their bowls in honour of the sultan.

Although Husayn Boyqaro rarely remembered "establishment" by Timur in public affairs, in such meetings he remained in faith to the traditions of his great ancestor. No matter how he tried to follow Timur, the time and the environment have made a big change. The feasts by the conqueror were combined with extraordinary splendor. In those days, the cook on a huge platter would bring entirely fatty horse and


pile them in the middle of the room like a mountain. Then the servants would tear them into pieces and hand them out to the guests. Everyone had to carry his share home, considering the adoption of take away meals and bones to eat them. But the wine was not always served. If they started to drink, they would drink without any measure like drinking mare's milk on the summer pasture. Huge, coarse, clumsy, unsophisticated heroes, mostly in Mongolian robes, demanded at the feast more and more drinks demonstrating their fearlessness, endurance and nobility. Those who left at least a drop of wine in the bowl had to drink one after another nine bowls at a time. If the last of the bowls had at least one drop he would drink another nine bowls!

The immutable rule about drinking without leaving a drop was also in Husayn Boyqaro's parties, but usually it was not often followed. The punishment was only occasionally used for the sake of amusement...

The wine loosened tongues and revived the feasting. From time to time the poets got up from their seats and solemnly holding up their bowls recited poems composed immediately or prepared in advance for the occasion. The orchestra consisting of gidjak, tanbur, nay, lute, tambourine and other instruments played Arab, Persian, Turkic and Uzbek melodies. Singers sang songs and dancers in festive robes started to fly among a wide range of audiences.

As soon as it got dark candles were lit in golden candlesticks. The carpets, cups, ruby wine and murals on the walls started to shine. The meeting brightened even more. Drinkers filled bowls without giving the cupbearer rest. Even though Husayn Boyqaro drank a lot, he was still completely sober. To lighten the mood he kept offering guests drink, but furtively he was watching the behavior of each of the people there.





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Following his custom, he got up and went out through the back door to get some fresh air and disappeared so suddenly that many of the gathered at first did not even notice his absence. Majididdin, as if he was only waiting for this moment, slipped out through another exit. Among the trees in the pale moonlight, Majididdin came across Husayn Boyqaro, he humbly approached the Sultan and respectfully asked him to pay attention to him for a minute: – Come on, let's listen to your request, – replied indifferently Husayn Boyqaro and went to a little house. At this time, two huge shadows appeared behind the Sultan at ten paces from him. Majididdin hesitated not knowing whether to go on or stop. These were two terrible bodyguards of the sovereign by the names – Doolana and Budana. Wherever Sultan Husayn was, they would always, especially at night, follow him, cleverly hiding from the people. Those who talked about Budana and Doolana were right: "Seven grandfathers of them were executioners and seven grandmothers of them were witches." Both were living embodiments of brute force; with a sound of their names anyone would shiver with fear. Their sovereign carried out dark bloody deeds with their hands.

Husayn Boyqaro mockingly looked at Majididdin. Budana and Dulana instantly disappeared like a shadow again! The Emperor entered the small ornate house. Majididdin, with his still shaking legs, even without asking permission stood on his knees in front of the Emperor. Now Husayn Boyqaro was already very tipsy. Squinting his drunken eyes he began chatting aimlessly jumping from state affairs to his personal ones and hinted his displeasure about some of his relatives without any reasons. Drunken candor encouraged Majididdin. Following the proverb "Strike the iron while it is hot", he began to praise the sul-

tan several times and repeated the following with his arms folded again and again:

– I am the most loyal dog in your doorstep.

– Faithful people will be always praised, but who is ungrateful will be punished! – said Husayn Boyqaro. Majididdin rose to his feet and said respectfully:

– Great King! Your despicable slave has a gift for you... I hope that you will accept it and raise the heart of your servant up to the heaven...

– Offering gifts and taking them is a superb deal, – said Husayn Boyqaro with a smile.

– The breath of fate brought us a fresh rose from the garden of beauty – said a mysteriously Majididdin. – Your slave cannot describe it to you. As soon as my eyes fell on this girl I realized that she was worthy of you.

Husayn's eyes lit up with lust.

– This gift is nicer than giving a whole kingdom. – said Husayn.

– This is only a small gift of your servant, – modestly bowed Majididdin.

– I am not exaggerating. Do you remember the famous ghazalle by Hafiz Shirazi?

– No, I do not remember, Your Majesty!

Husayn Boyqaro, shaking his head in tact, read it:

*Agar on turki sheroziy ba dast orad dili moro,
Ba holi hinduyash bahsham Samarkandu Buhoro'.*

– Yes, I remembered it, – said Majididdin getting happy, – I even heard about the story which took place between your grandfather Timur and the poet.

– This story is very famous with people.

¹ Meaning: if that beauty from Shiraz can occupy my heart, I will present Bukhara and Samarkand for only her black mole.



Majididdin asked how to deliver the gift to the king's harem. Husayn Boyqaro paused and suddenly rose and headed for the exit. Pausing for a moment in the doorway, he said:

– I want to take you from Mirzoyi Kichik.

– For me, it is a great honour not only to serve at the foot of your throne, but also I will be proud to serve you as your warrior, – said Majididdin.

When they returned to the hall, the banquet was in full swing. Majididdin proudly went after the king and sat on his original place. beks and officials pointedly looked at each other. The party lasted until the morning. Majididdin, whose sleepless eyes were about to close, was tired and returned home. From high minarets of mosques, the ringing voice of the muazzin started to sound. Gardeners and farmers hurried to the market through the main road leading to the gate Mulk. They stretched from the gate driving their loaded horses and donkeys or just carrying on their heads large baskets with grapes and other fruits.

As soon as Majididdin arrived home he called his wife, who had not washed her face and hands yet and ordered her to dress up Dildor in the best dresses and jewelry and send her to the harem of the Emperor. Then he threw himself on the bed without taking his clothes off. At noon he was woken up by good news: according to the royal decree he was appointed as parvanachi.

CHAPTER IX

I

After a bit of frost and awaited snow, a white shroud covered trees and roofs and had not melted for two days. In the palace of the sultan, the work for winter has been prepared with their peculiar pleasure and entertainment.

Navoiy, according to the existing custom among the aristocracy in Herat, wrote to one of his friends "a snowy letter", which drew a poetic picture of the winter and vibrant colors of the depicted experiences in his heart.

*Tuzulgay yor ila bazmi visoli,
Vale agyoridin ul bolsa holi.
Soqiyo, day shiddatidan aqlu hush betob erur,
Chorasi jomi bullurin ichra la' li nob erur.
Husho bazm aro oru, may bolsa day,
May andoqki out, ot andoqki may.*

*(Let the luxurious to be a feast day in meetings
with the road,*

*But I want to be at the feast with them alone!
About cupbearer, from winter my mind faded, faded
But there is a cure for the mind - a glass of bubbly,
Kohl give wine and give fire, frost is not terrible.
Fire - such as wine, and as the fire - wine.)*

On the occasion of the first snow one of his friends invited Navoiy to his place that day, but Navoiy carried on with his work and forgot about the invitation. In the minutes when he was free from state affairs the poet did not remain idle: he read and wrote poems, practiced calligraphy and tried to write new melodies.



Sometimes he even studied drawing, trying to express their thoughts in his paintings. Reflections, books and music were his everlasting companions. He liked to repeat the saying: "An hour of thinking is better than a year of piety."

The windows were firmly locked. There was a furnishing with refined taste and some internal harmony and a glowing brazier filled with bright red coals in the middle of the room. On the stained upper part of the glass windows the rays of the winter sun were playing. Navoiy sat near the brazier putting a book on the book sheet of colored paper on his lap. Slightly tilting his head covered with a pointed skull-cap, the poet started to write with his pencil.

The throes of creation are compared with pangs of childbirth. When Navoiy's heart is awakened by the throes of creation, this suffering gives him the highest degree of pleasure, consoling like the song of Mother and giving life and joy like the sun. He writes so easily with such sincere, joyful enthusiasm. He was a true magician of the word. Any fleeting thought, any subtle, elusive peace of movement, the excitement of feeling in the heart, he knew how to put them into words with remarkable brightness: he could show the waves of the sea with his words, with a spark he could kindle a lot of light from everyday life and create sublime, deep legends... He was a poet who had mastered the millennial culture treasures of thought for many centuries. The genius of his poetry was deeply rooted in the soil of art of Arabs, Iranians and the Turks, blossomed in their undying force.

Navoiy knew by heart tens of thousands of poems. At the age of four he learnt a lot of poems by heart; and at the age of nine he engrossed in scientific, philosophical works; as a child he undertook discussions with experienced poets on the art of poetry.



Chinese dishes. Navoiy loved graceful things. He thought: "There are many amazing masters in all fields of art in Khorasan. There are many talented craftsmen, skilled, hardworking people among the people of Khorasan. Why, for example, Chinese porcelain, Chinese silk, Kashmir shawls cannot be produced in Herat? We should develop these crafts, it is necessary to encourage the people that may raise these crafts to the high level of art!" Navoiy remembered the amazing items made by the hands of masters of Herat which he had recently seen at the festival of artisans. He was convinced that many imported items from distant countries could be manufactured in the Herat.

Navoiy got cold. He sat in front of the barbecue and slightly took the copper tongs of ash coals. Then he folded his arms and surrendered again by poetic fantasies. "An hour of thinking is better than a year of piety!" He wanted to create a great poem to show the strength and beauty of his native language. His thoughts soared in the lovely gardens of ancient legends. Why are the golden gates of these gardens closed to his people?! Are his people inferior in everything to the Arabs or the Iranians? No! He must create for his contemporaries an unfading flower garden of poetry!

The door opened slowly and Sheikh Bahlul appeared who had recently been hired by the poet. He was a modest, educated and soft in nature, humble young man. Sheikh Bahlul appreciated his master's talent and considered it an honour to serve him.

- Please, what do you want to say? - asked absently Navoiy.

- His Majesty Sultan inquired about you in the palace - Bahlul Sheikh replied.

Navoiy paused, lowered his head, then said in an angry voice: "Tell him I'll be there soon." Sheikh Bahlul nodded and left. Then the poet draped on a

silk robe trimmed with beaver fur. On the street, at the gate, he got on his horse and went to the palace.

In the Tarabhona¹ the clerks met Navoiy with the usual deference. The poet went upstairs. There were four hujras on the four sides and there was a vast hall in the middle of them, the walls of which had pictures of battles and campaigns. Husayn Boyqaro received Navoiy in this room. After the customary bow Navoiy inquired about the health of the Sultan and sat down and glanced out over the painted walls. He carefully paid attention to the heroes: they lift up their horses, throw arrows defensively as a shield against the attacks and hold the sword over the head of the enemy. He did not notice liveliness or motion in their faces. Husayn Boyqaro began to complain about some rulers of the state. Taking this opportunity Navoiy expressed his observations and suggestions concerning public affairs. He said it was necessary to pay attention to agriculture and handicrafts promoting the prosperity of the country, and especially he pointed out the importance of patronizing scientists, poets, artists and musicians. A Sovereign must always be aware of what is going on in the capital and in all the regions of the country, he must carefully monitor the activities of his officials, — said Navoiy. Husayn Boyqaro listened to the poet attentively. Then, gently pushing back his astrakhan hat and smiling, he announced why he had invited the poet there: he offered Alisher the post of Emir in the chancellery. This proposal excited Navoiy.

— Once again you pick up this complicated issue, — he said. — and yet, you know that your humble servant has objections on this matter.

Husayn Boyqaro frowned:

— We have considered these objections, but we found your arguments unconvincing. Our hearts will

¹ The name of one of the palaces in Herat



not rest until we elevate you to the position of Emir. There is no man who can equal you in our country. By the will of Allah, our decision will bring good results.

– Thank you for your royal mercy, but, if it is possible, please, release me from any official posts... – Navoiy said flatly. – Being Emir and sealing in the chancellery is an honourable thing, but my heart is more inclined toward my freedom. I wish to serve the state and the people with a pure heart. Perhaps my objections seem meaningless, but if you think about it – I'm sure they will become apparent to you. After all, if I accept the position of the Emir, many noble people will be sad. The soul of man is not free from weaknesses. Unnecessary gossips will rise. Hypocrisy will replace the friendship...

Husayn Boyqaro waved indicating that the decision had already been made.

– If we wanted anything to happen we cannot stand objections, – he said smiling. – We will give order that no Emir cannot sit above you in the meetings. As the Emir Muzaffar Barlos and you are good friends, only he will be able to sit above you to put his stamp if you will allow me. Now it's up to the stars. Once stargazers appoint the happy hour, you will attach the print.

Navoiy tried to bring new objections, new evidence, but Husayn Boyqaro did not want to hear anything. Eventually Navoiy had to thank him for unsolicited grace of the sovereign. Husayn Boyqaro invited him for the day's evening feast.

The poet came down to the lower floor of the Tarabhona. Navoiy's friends were gathered in one of the rooms. They were: Pahlavan Mohammad Sayeed, the vizier Khodja Ato, Khodja Abdullah Marvoriy and others. They all stood up and greeted Navoiy cordially. Khodja Ato was a modest man. He carried

out his work very carefully without any noise. Muhammad Sayeed was a skillful fighter, musician and poet and a great friend of Navoiy. Pahlavon started to speak slowly through his thick lips and told them many interesting things about the art of fighting. He took his nineteen year old nephew from his madrassah for some time to prepare him for the meeting with the famous foreign fighters, who were expected to come to Herat and talked about how he was training him. Then the conversation turned to poetry, music, philosophy, dervish and other abstract themes. Khodja Afzal entered and congratulated Navoiy on the mercy of the Sultan. Friends received the news about the new appointment of Navoiy with great joy. Navoiy was surprised that the news about his appointment spread so quickly. Pahlavan, smiling with his broad bearded face, said excitedly:

– This is the golden page in the history of the ancient Khorasan!

– Today is the birthday of the people's happiness,
– added Khodja Afzal.

Majididdin, Nizomumulk, Emir Mogul and some other beks entered. They greeted the poet as if they knew nothing about the news, but their eyes were telling that they were aware of it. Parvanachi Majididdin tried to keep himself haughtily as much as possible now. Emir Mogul glanced at Majididdin, winking his drunken eyes. Majididdin also gave him a strange sign. Some barlos beks were morose and silent. Only tricky Nizomumulk, as usual, discharged and uppity, like a peacock, tried to show himself as a devoted friend of the poet. He approached the poet and whispered and congratulated him on the high position. Navoiy sneered and said loudly: "In my opinion, there is no high or low position. For the sake of the people I would be proud to be even a simple warrior!" Nizo-



mumulk looked round with his sly eyes. He studied his glittering rings on his hand and pet his beautiful beard and shook his head slowly:

– Of course, it must be like this! – he said. Soon the palace servants came and invited everyone to the feast. All stood up noisily and left.

II

On the third day of his appointment Navoiy held a big celebration in his house. The spacious, white house was full with a lot of guests. Then he cordially greeted guests. The host could not sit down even for a second. He went silently into the kitchen to see how the chef was doing and gave some instructions and reminded him about something and left the kitchen again. Then he went to the storageroom to see what is going on with the preparation of halva and other sweets. He told them to cook better and more. Whenever his house was filled with people, Navoiy always did his best to receive guests.

In a large, luxuriously furnished room the beks, policymakers, famous poets and scholars of Herat, Iraq and Azerbaijan were gathered. General conversation had not started yet and everyone talked to his neighbor. In the corner a few beks were talking about war and hunting. Sul-tonmurod was quietly talking in Arabic with an Iraqi scientist. Strapping Muhammad Sayyid Pakhlavan was making a friendly conversation with a fussy little old man – astrologer. He would quickly and easily guess the stars using their secret councils, everything that Supreme Sovereign wanted: happiness or unhappiness, evil or good deeds, success or failure. If Ulughbek, according to Navoiy, relegated the sky to the earth with his work, that is, made clear to people the laws of motion of stars, this

old man pushed its heavenly distance further and enveloped its density with a veil of secrets. When the poor man must withdraw to wear his pants; what day and hour should the Sultan sit on the golden throne; when writing a love letter is all right? When should the poison be prepared for the enemy? – all those were submitted to the astrologer by the stars. In the palace from ancient times important business and events were supposed to be carried out according to the time selected by the astrologer. Today, he also chose the right hour for Navoiy to become Emir.

– According to our science, Allah has appointed something for every day. One star becomes a king, another will be a vizier, – said the astrologer and took back his words with hand motions. – Today, the lord of all things is the sun, the vizier is the moon. Contemplate carefully the essence of things – all the famous events happen on this day. I have chosen the star named Zukhra¹ for Alisher Navoiy. This is an hour of every good cause. Venus, today, is in apogee and it is on the seventh sky. Its image is also consistent with the basic nature of Alisher. For Venus, it is portrayed as the dancing beauties with chang and kamancha in its hands; it signifies beauty, art, joy and success.

Pahlavon Muhammad Sayeed asked the old man in order to continue the conversation, but at this time the Sultan's personal servants came from the palace. They brought the Emir's dress, embroidered with gold for Navoiy. Navoiy, untied the knot and dressed in the fine clothes with a smile. His friends joyfully began to congratulate him. Only Barlos beks, Majididdin and some other officials who followed them like a shadow, limited with formal greeting trying to hide the light of envy in their eyes. One of the visitors from the palace picked up a scroll, raised it above his head and gave it

¹ venus



to Navoiy with a respectful bow. It was a decree which began with the words: «It is Abulgazi Sultan Husayn Boyqaro addressing to you.» The decree was supposed to be sent to all the regions. The new emir was supposed to make his own stamp to the official paper for the very first time on this solemn meeting.

Everyone kept silent. Everybody was excited. All eyes with so many different thoughts and feelings were fixed on Navoiy! The poet slightly bowed his head and he seemed to be nervous and embarrassed. Meaningful glances of the beks and officials met for a moment and immediately parted as if they all were afraid of each other. Even Muzaffar Barlos, who was the darling of the sultan for his past merits, strong and often refused to obey the sultan, got pale. "Does this poet put his stamp above all emirs?" When Navoiy's stamp was attached to the decree, a sigh of relief swept through the hall. The new emir has made his stamp in a place that no one could put his own stamp below it. Everybody was shocked with Navoiy's modesty. They did not know where to hide their panicking eyes.

The poet Atoulloh and a famous scholar Burhaniddin read their odes written on the occasion of this important event. Then a few poets recited excitedly their odes dedicated to Navoiy. On this glorious day, all his friends, family, representatives of the common people, one after another came to congratulate the poet. Taking part in a big joyful feast, the gathered people dispersed.

CHAPTER X

I

After the Friday prayers Gavharshodbegim Madrassah was in complete silence. Most of the residents of the madrassahs had gone to the town for a walk or to visit their friends. Sul-tonmurod sat alone in his hujra. Now he met the famous Khorasan scientists and took part in scientific debates. His ability and wide knowledge in different fields of science increased his fame every day. He often met with Navoiy. Although many young "seekers of science" turned to the young scientist with a request to give them lessons Sul-tonmurod did not start lecturing in any madrassah. The boy really wanted to get a post of mudarris, but in Herat there were so many scientists who openly feuded among themselves for the right to take this position that it was not easy for Sul-tonmurod to realize his hopes. He lacked the courage to compete with the glorious elders. Navoiy, who patronized all poor students of Herat, provided special attention and assistance to Sul-tonmurod, so that the young scientist was completely spared from lack of money.

In the silent madrassahs, in his small room, a young man was suffering severely. He saw Dildor only once in the evening for a few moments, but the love of a young prisoner, like a cruel disease, glowed in his heart intensifying with each passing day. Sul-tonmurod knew this girl was unattainable for him, but his heart was not listening to the arguments of reason. To forget her he kept reading books in his Hujra for several days. But after swallowing dozens of volumes, he again was given endless agonizing thoughts about his love...

Now he again turned to books trying to get away from the sad thoughts. Starting with easy, fun ghazals



Sultonmurod moved to the most complex, puzzling writings, but a minute later he threw them away and grabbed a pen and paper and began to write a letter to Dildor. Sad words covered one sheet after another. A love letter to a simple village girl was graced with dozens of beautiful poems by all kinds of poets, profound Rubaiys devoted to love and passion. These effusions were relieving. The young man read the letter. Hot tears dripped from his eyes: "What is the use to write? These words will never reach her. The tyrant ripped this rose, so he cast her in his arms and then he would pass her to some rough warrior!"

The young man put the pieces of paper on the shelf and threw himself on the bed. He was exhausted.

Zayniddin entered the room humming cheerfully. He was drunk.

– Hello, esteemed scientist!

– Come, oh, flower of my heart! – Sultonmurod exclaimed with relief.

Zayniddin looked at his friend and sat down beside him on the bed. He has already spent time for a week in a society of poets, calligraphers and other prominent people of Khorasan and now he casually looked into madrassahs to visit his friends. Now Zayniddin rarely attended lectures, he wanted to improve his skills in calligraphy and was heavily involved in music, but there were many good handwriters and appreciators of beautiful books in Herat. This guy, who was like a dancer and light like a bird, got into extremely difficult situation to make any correspondence and built a reputation among professional scribes who knew how to rewrite beautifully and without a single error in several days. Zayniddin sometimes copied poems by famous poets and sometimes made copies from various collections commissioned by booksellers.

– Are you sick? – asked anxiously Zayniddin.



– No, I am only lonely... – With a forced smile replied Sul-tonmu-rod.

– My friend, – said sympathetically Zayniddin, – in your heart there is tableware of sadness. I have been noticing it recently but I did not dare to ask you about it. Today, the inner fire is burning your face. Sulking is useless!

Sul-tonmu-rod closed his eyes and sighed softly. Zayniddin, appealing to his feelings of friendship, demanded openness. Finally Sul-tonmu-rod, rising, took the recently written letter from the shelf and handed it to his friend.

– Here is a pale reflection of my endless sufferings – he said looking down.

Zayniddin carefully read all eight pages. His hands trembled slightly, sadness spread on his face. When he finished reading he looked at his friend sympathetically. He was unconscious.

– Why didn't you tell me about it immediately? – reproachfully said Zayniddin.

– Could you take the iron hand of fate from me? – Sul-tonmu-rod replied after a short pause.

– Yes, I could have! – said flatly Zayniddin. – I was able to pull out the steppe nets of violence from the neck of that beauty. Togonbek would perform any of my requests those days. I could have twisted that fool as I wanted.

– Alas! – sadly exclaimed Sul-tonmu-rod. – Rose of my love was cherished by sadness. This cup of suffering is enough for a lifetime to me!

– This letter is a sacred book of lovers – said Zayniddin looking at the sheets of paper. – Are you going to send it to her?

– It is impossible and even useless, – Sul-tonmu-rod said.



Zayniddin nodded. There was a heavy silence. Sul-tonmurod then asked what was being done in Herat. Every new event which occurred among the common people or the aristocracy, now was known to Zaynid-din. Zayniddin knew that Sul-tonmurod was mostly interested in the events of scientists and poets, but this time he decided to tell the various small funny stories to cheer his friend up.

- No wonder they say that in all the inhabited parts of the world there is no another city like Herat, - said Zayniddin trying to be jocular. My lifetime is not enough to tell about the most outstanding events of this week... Recently Badiuzzamon has been given a magnificent collection. Outstanding people say that there is no other prince like him in the East or the West; ever since the world was created he was not satisfied with such a reception. Musician Ustad Kul-muhammad Udiy and Sheikh Noi were there. Sheikh played a beautiful melody with a nay. Ustad Kulmu-hammad tried to play the same tune on the gijjak, but it did not work smoothly. Kulmuhammad said that the gijjak was wrong. Sheikh Noi immediately took the gijjak from the hands of Ustad and sang this tune with such an art that those present expressed their pleasure with loud exclamations.

- From the Sheikh's musical instruments not only people but the stars fall from the sky - said perking up slightly Sul-tonmurod. - However, Ustad Kulmu-hammad is also a very skillful master. He is a creator of music. Who but he has attached the third string to gijjak? Under the patronage of Navoiy, and his taste in music and knowledge, Kulmuhammad will create many great wonderful things...

- It is useless to argue, - Zayniddin agreed.

- Tell me more. Your stories, like a warm wind, make my heart blossom!



– Do you know Mirza Pirim? – asked Zayniddin.

– They say he is incomparable, but I have not seen him, – said Sul-tonmu-rod.

– Besides the beauty, he still has many other advantages. No musician can compete with him on playing the Qonun¹. Mirza Pirim is such a pleasant companion that anyone who talks to him will not want to talk to anyone else. You see, one of the wives of the deceased king Abu Sayyid Mirza by the name Rukiyabegim, took her into his service. Rukiyabegim has not got a single tooth in the mouth, and on her head there is no a single black hair... an amazing old woman. She makes funny feasts and lives in the world of wine and music. She recites verses without a veil. They say that even men hesitate to go to her feasts. Rukiyabegim fell in love with Mirza Pirim and lost her peace. She put on all sorts of decorations and tried to strike fire from the ice. Mirza Pirim who appreciates the beauty of youth and spiritual pride, rejected all overtures of this ugly woman. To avoid falling into the clutches of wily, old woman, he fled from Herat. Hiding he lived in Balkh, in Astrabad and in Nishapur... Infuriated Rukiyabegim sent people for him and the other day the unfortunate young man was brought to Herat. She said that Mirza Pirim squandered three thousand dinars of her money. Now he's in a very difficult position. What will end it – is unknown.

– God help us! – exclaimed in surprise Sul-tonmu-rod.

Zayniddin read a rubaiy by one poet about Rukiyabegim. The rubaiy was so shamelessly and so consistent in quality of the aged beauty that Sul-tonmu-rod laughed involuntarily. Zayniddin also laughed to tears. Wiping his wet eyes with a handkerchief he looked out the window. The sky was covered with



¹ Musical instrument

clouds and it was difficult to determine the time. Zayniddin asked Sul-tonmurod the time.

– I was hoping maybe you would stay with me to-day, – distractedly said Sul-tonmurod holding his friend's hand. – Tell me what else is new?

– Okay, I will sit for another minute. But then you will come with me.

Sul-tonmurod gestured as if he wanted to say: "We'll see."

After telling some news and anecdotes Zayniddin finally stood up.

– Rather put on your festive robe, wrap a turban.

– Where are we going to? – asked Sul-tonmurod who did not want to go.

– If you want to dispel the bitterness that has accumulated in your heart of a lifetime then come with me.

– Funny gatherings do not attract me. You have comforted me a little, that's enough.

– Your captivating beauty is now winning the hearts of others. Resign yourself to the fate, – said Zayniddin. – Forget her! If you want I'll introduce you to our Herati fairies. You will smell ten roses and choose one!

– Oh, if I could forget her, – said bitterly Sul-tonmurod. – Dildor is the sun in the sky of beauty!

– That sun went behind clouds!

Again Sul-tonmurod's eyes filled with tears. Zayniddin pulled the boy's hand.

– You still have no idea about the Herati amusements, – he said hotly. – Old people say that our modern Herat reminds them of Samarkand during the reign of Amir Timur and Ulughbek... Come on, I'm not taking you to some feast with raging passions. You will see wonderful society; you will meet with the masters of chess.

Sultonmu rod rose. He put on an expensive silk robe which had recently been presented to him by Navoiy. Putting on his turban he said:

— In those days, even in Samarkand, Sheikh-ul-Islam would invite beautiful musicians and singers to his feasts and would drink wine and play chess.

When I was in Samarkand I heard amazing stories about it.

In the area near the madrassah a large crowd surrounded the famous fool of Herat by the name Dervish Shamrez. This ragged dervish with his hair falling down on his shoulders and glowing eyes enjoyed great fame among people. Many worshipped him believing that he was a miracle and a saint; others loved him for his jokes, aphorisms and sharp ridicule. The fool with a loud voice would read ghazals and then he would move onto funny jokes and publicly use obscenity causing laughter. Sultonmu rod and Zayniddin stood a bit and moved on. They took the road leading to the pond Mahian. There were closely adjacent to each other gardens, small fields, orchards and flower beds on both sides of the road. Among them in the drowning green of the trees there were visible light decker palaces covered with brightly painted walls, huge gorgeous homes of the rich and the beks; beside them as if ashamed of his wretched form, pressed to the ground were dilapidated ramshackle huts of Herati craftsmen. Zayniddin turned left. At the end of a narrow, curved street lined with old one-story houses with brightly painted gates, Zayniddin and his companion entered the gate and walked between the rows of slender cypress trees in the garden which were beautiful even in winter. Out of a new single-storey house with painted walls came toward them an exquisitely dressed young man. It was the son of a big merchant of Herat. His father, the owner of many shops in the



bazaar, was famous for the fact that once he invited a prince to his place and set a table of thousands of different dishes and surprised the prince. The young rich boy greeted Zayniddin whom he met at some meeting. Fearing that the boy will not pay enough attention to Sul-tonmu-rod, Zayniddin immediately introduced his friend and began to praise him as a great scientist. Sul-tonmu-rod modestly greeted the host blushing and tried to turn the words of Zayniddin into a joke. The young man smiling affably led them into the house.

There were many people in a room which was richly decorated with Chinese dishes, Iranian and Indian silk fabrics and all sorts of rarities. There were the sons of beks dressed in silk and velvet gowns and young dandies who belonged to the wealthy families of the capital as well as many chess fans there. They all talked about all sorts of things: a new palace being built in the garden of the sovereign so-called Jahonoro; the latest ghazal by Navoiy and the music composed by Khodja Abdullah Marvoriy and about Islim Barlos's behavior during a game of chess.

Finally, the long-awaited moment came. A square scarf was spread and then they laid the chess board, a small tambourine and dagger in the middle of the room. Famous masters – Mavlono Khodja and Emir Khalil sat on their haunches before the board and began to arrange the ivory figures of chess. Both of them have reached middle age but, nevertheless, they were dapper dressers like funny young dandies. Those present gathered around the players. Sul-tonmu-rod pushed Zayniddin's knee and showed his surprise to the tambourine and dagger. Zayniddin whispered into his ear smiling:

– Do not try to give advice to the players during the game.

Sul-tonmu-rod was even more surprised.

– They really do not rush the advisers with a dagger, but they will get very angry, – said Zayniddin in whisper.

– And what about tambourine? – again Sultonmurod pushed him.

– Hold on, you will see...

The start of the game was not particularly interesting, but as the famous wizard played all stared at the board. Soon, however, the game activated. Emir Khalil went on the attack. Spectators got pale with excitement, their eyes inflamed. Finally Emir Khalil managed to lead the enemy into confusion. With scarcely perceptible smile he proudly looked around and read an appropriate verse to the occasion in a pleasant voice.

The viewers' excitement intensified. Khodja furrowed his eyebrows, he finally found a way out of the difficult situation. Sultonmurod, who was absorbed in watching the game, pointedly looked at his friend and expressed his admiration for the skill of the players. Having made a successful move, Khodja read a corresponding verse stating deliverance from danger. Those who have heard this verse for the first time, started to repeat it with pleasure to each other's ears trying to remember it. While Amir Khalil was thinking about a move, Khodja jumped up and hit the tambourine, spectators drew back expanding the circle and Khodja himself playing up the tambourine, danced with such an enthusiasm that the present burst involuntarily into cries of delight. Mavlon Khodja made with comic gestures that no one could repeat... The game got more aggravated. Both masters sprinkled poems and quatrains. Taking shape each started dancing and in addition uttered a few verses.

The opponents did not only compete in a game of chess, but also in the knowledge of the set of poems

