

84(54)
3 87

TAHIR JULMATOV



Young Temur

11 8.08
17

84(51)
J 87

Tahir JULMATOV

YOUNG TEMUR

151873

QIROATXONA

"FARHOD" MS
KUTUBXONA

Tashkent - 2009

84(5Y)6
J92

Translated from Russian by
Mardon Suleymanov

Julmatov, Tahir.

J92 Young Temur/ T. Julmatov; Translated from Russian by M. Suleymanov. –
Tashkent: «ART FLEX», 2009. – 314 p.

The book “Young Temur” is the featured historical work where the youth of the Great general and statesman is disclosed. The birth, growth and formation of a great personality is described with reliable facts as the family, relatives, friends and doctors of Temur are drawn upon with unostentatious touch. In the book the chronic narration clearly stands out.

In 1997 “Young Temur” was published in the Russian language by the Publishing House named after Gafur Gulyam. The book became very popular with Russian-language people. The publication of the “Young Temur” in the English language will open the culture of Middle Asia during the middle-ages to readers in English speaking countries.

BBK 84(5Y)6

ISBN 978-9943-301-45-0

© Tahir Julmatov, 2007
© «ART FLEX» Publishing House, 2009

In memory of my father

FROM THE AUTHOR

Oh, Samarkand! Merely your name is full of music and mystery. Is there anyone, who only once seeing you became aware of touching the eternity and majesty?

My father, once being a city mayor of Samarkand, got used to see everyday the amazed faces of people who came to see the wonder of the Orient for the first time. He was proud and happy that Samarkand became his destiny. But he was sorry that he couldn't answer many questions of the city visitors coming from the different parts of the world. Eminent people also visited the city. The first Prime Minister of India Javaharlal Neru wished to get to know about Amir Temur as much as possible.

My father when accompanying the visitors and guests was in difficult to find additional information about Amir Temur. Newertheless, he was certainly aware that there was a great number of literature sources spread over the museums and libraries of the world. As far as my father promised to study deeply the history of Samarkand Rulers in details and pay his debt to the Uzbek people and began to teach himself and me. I gained all good beginnings from my father - the deep devotion to ancient and ever-green noble Samarkand and to its great ancestors. And all my perceptions which I realized standing in front of the mausoleum of Gur-Amir or in the Ulugbek observatory I want to tell all who are attracted by the two mysterious words forming one of the greatest names - Amir Temur.

Chapter I



RULERS' BIRTH

The harmony of an awakening morning reigned all over the world. Young pine tree tops sparkled with the rosy rays of the sun and the morning birds filled up the groves with their joyful chirps. The grass crept softly after the heavy rains covering the immense steppe with an emerald carpet.

At dawn young mares with blowing silky manes rushed through the dew splashed grass. Their jubilantly calling neighs burst out from their strong flesh. Two magnificent white stallions rush towards them lathering with joyful desire. Snorting heavily they suddenly stopped running, examining each other sullenly. They prepare for a mortal duel. Filled with anger, necks bent and legs lifted high, they meet in fighting. For a moment they hesitate, then snorting and neighing shrilly they rear and fight with the front hooves. At last, heavily snorting, one of them gives up, realizing that he will not win any of the mares. But the struggle's passion and haughty stubbornness make the wounded horse turn round sharply to face his rival in order to protect his wounded chest. The two stallions keep fighting, dully striking each other with heavy and powerful blows. Finally, the wounded stallion, painfully hobbling on his hind legs makes a few steps aside, and his mas-

sive body falls. He fells on the thick high grass which is tickling the satiny paunches of the recently contested mares. They had stopped running and were leisurely chewing the juicy grass not far away. They have waited for the end of the duel, after which they might greet their master with joyful neighing. And there he is - the winner, with a white star on his forehead. Delightfully neighing he jumps up on the thick weaving grass towards the morning dawn, to his retaken herd.

Golden rays have touched the almond trees that carry a divine fragrance to the foothill where the hidden village lies. The constantly murmuring streams rush down from the snow-white mountains and reached the shady poplar alley leading to Khodjailgar* village. One of the streams with pure water ran directly to the splendid house of Amir Muhammad Taragay where silence reigned for the time being.

Bekk* Taragay was lying on the silk pillows in his sweet-scent summerhouse. He was eating hot flat bread fresh from the tandir* dipping it into thick snow-white cream. Amir was excited. He anticipated the joy of his father with God's favour, of course. And so quite absent-mindedly he listened to the morning singing of his pet-starling. Bekk admired the bird with a dissipated smile and in some of its cracking sounds he could hear a welcoming joy.

A young man quietly came up to the summerhouse; his dark face expressed a good nature. He was Mobashar, the most devoted servant of Taragay. He was wearing a "diba" robe of kashgar* fabric tied together with a woolen belt. Half asleep he bowed down, put his right hand to his chest and hoarsely mumbled as an old man:

- Bekk would like to say something?

Yesterday Amir had forced Mobashar drink two bowls of grape wine. When he was in a good mood Taragay sometimes liked to spoil his servants, and this was apparent from Mobashar's mood.

- Stop clowning, Bekk muttered displeased.

Mobashar, as if from the blow of a whip, abruptly straightened. His face grew narrow and inscrutably indifferent and impassionate. The young man knew well how to keep a distance with his master. Now Taragay was not in the mood for jokes.

- Master, I am all ears, muttered the young man.

Amir became kinder; he thought that this great day he should not get angry about trifles. Taragay, having smiled, asked:

- Have you found out about the mistress's health?

- Yes, Bekk, answered the youth lively. - Delivery is not easy, but there is an experienced midwife.

- Well, all right, nodded Amir, yawning openly and closed the mouth with the palm. Suddenly he saw a girl in a lilac glaze in the summerhouse with a baby in her arms whispering something to her child. She was walking in the garden, gently whispering to her baby. - Who is she? Taragay asked with a hoarse voice.

- She is going to be the heir's wet-nurse - answered Mobashar.

- Pthu-ptu-ptu! - Bekk timorously spat over his shoulder to avoid the evil eye. You can not say so as nobody is born yet, and you have already found the wet-nurse.

- What are you talking about, Bekk? Yesterday you ordered to bring her from the neighboring village - the servant replied confidently.

Taragay puzzled, shrugged his shoulders. In this chaos one could forget his own name, not to mention one's own orders. He thought for a while and requested her to be invited to the summerhouse. Mobashar rushed to fulfill the master's will. When he looked at the wet-nurse Taragay was speechless, and he was unable to breathe. Clever Mobashar understood at once that he should disappear. Amir was examining the motionless woman with interest. She had realized that her fate would be defined soon. Taragay thoughtfully rubbed his chin and asked:

- What village are you from?

The woman raised her eyebrows in astonishment and said in bewilderment:

- I am the widow of the deceased Jahongir.

Taragay could not see anything in front of his eyes. Oh, Allah! How could he have forgotten! She had sent him a desperate message saying that she was in trouble. And Bekk promised her dying husband to take care of her and child and had taken her and the baby to his house.

The woman, being in an awkward situation, embarrassingly covered her doll-like face with her sleeve. But suddenly, having made up her mind, she said:

- Pardon me, dear Bekk. I did not take a scarf for covering my face before a stranger, but regarding you as my master, I should not hide my face from my master.

- Right you are, beautiful, from now the face of the wet-nurse will not be covered. I should see it.

Bekk melodiously continued: - What is your name, my beauty?

The woman raised her long eyelashes and in a murmuring voice answered:

- Olja Oim Inaga. And my daughter's name is Bibi.

Taragay involuntarily covered his face with his hands. He distinctly remembered this warrior, brave and even a little arrogant - confident in his young strength. During the last campaign Jahongir was the first to climb up the assailed fortress of the enemy. The Mongolian prince, the campaign leader, presented Jahongir with a robe from his own shoulder for the courage that he had shown: a treasured gift for a warrior. Jahongir had always boasted of his braveness, but the enemy arrow was merciless. It hit the young warrior piercing the pahlavon's* strong neck. The bleeding hero was quickly carried off out of the battlefield. He laid helplessly on the frozen grass, writhing in the last convulsions of death.

Whispering, almost by his eyes only he called Taragay.

- Closer, closer, - his pale lips whispered. As the Bekk leaning on his sword knelt down, Jahongir groaned through tortured lips: - I have a beautiful wife and she is going to have a baby. Who will have my Olja Oim Inaga?! The warrior's face became purple and thick blood came out of his mouth. Having gathered his last strength, he raised his head and hoarsely said: "I'd rather kill her than to see her in someone else's hands"...

At that moment Bekk's heart was filled with a freezing horror. He couldn't understand whether the dying man uttered these words or if they had just appeared in his mind: - "Take care of her, sarhang".* But his answer was convincing in the presence of the subdued warriors.

- In the name of Allah, I swear!

Olja Oim Inaga... - how could he forget?

Bekk took his hands off the pale face.

- So, you have a daughter... and I am going to have a son.

The wet-nurse, having received permission placed the precious bundle on a thick blanket (kurpacha) and came closer to the master's bed.

- My dear Bekk your heir will be a great warrior, my heart feels it, I know.

Bekk nodded:

- I know it as well.

Along the path leading to the summerhouse, the first wife of Taragay, Iukun-khotun - the daughter of Kazagon bekk - appeared. She was, as always, followed by her irreplaceable servant (Koidun) and his sweet smile.

When he saw that women, Taragay grimaced as if he had a toothache. Glancing at the wet-nurse who jumped up to run away, he himself rose from the chair and disappeared before his wife came to the summerhouse.

His wife seemed to feel that something was amiss and walked into the garden nodding haughtily. Taragay was irritated looking at his wife and her irreplaceable companion. What a wonderful pair! Iukun-khotun - thin, tall and pale, and her slave Koidun - short, fat and always foul smelling. The incident broke Taragay's pleasant mood. He married against his will.

Taragay's influential relatives together with Kesh Hoji Abdul Khalil had arranged for him to marry a daughter of the bekk of Kazagon, who was the ruler of a powerful Turkish clan. All the Barloss family saw a great profit in the marriage of Taragay and Iukun-khotun. Joining with such a family meant to gain a reliable ally. Important guests from Turkestan, Iran, Maverannahr and Turon came to the wedding party.

During the party Taragay was impressed by the clothes that his father-in-law was wearing. He had a snow-white turban on his head called an "udana". His silk robe - "zarboft" was shining brighter than the sun. But his conversation with his father-in-law was the most surprising.

What language do you speak at home? - the bekk of Kazagon asked Taragay.

Taragay looked up to him with great surprise.

- Turkic and Tajik* in general.

- I thought so. Your way of thinking is good, my son, - his father-in-law said nodding approvingly. Two powerful, great people - the Turks and the Tajiks always lived in peace. Their customs and traditions are the same. Together they fought against the same enemies, since the invasion of Alexander the Great to the devastating storm of the Mongol hordes. Side by side, tear to tear, blood to blood, they fought for their independence. Two Aimak,* two people...

Such a brave speech by Taragay's father in-law exited him so that he could hardly breathe. The power of the Mongols seemed unshakable, and speaking about them smelled of death. The frightened expression on Taragay's face didn't stop Kazagon from continuing:

- The "Earth Shaker", Genghis Khan has incorporated Tatars, Kipchaks,* Uigurs,* polvons from the desert tribes, Turks and Sogds* into his armies. The true Mongols are few in number. All positions, from foreman to general, were taken by Mongols and the "lowest-rank" tribes had to assault the fortresses. The number of Mongols is not enough to settle on the lands won by them (from Irtysh to Baghdad and from China to Danube). The Mongols are cunning. They settle Aimak on Khan's lands, but drive away Moslem djigits along uluses.* They are headed by murz; and rumors were that the Mongol tribes have settled here or there. But the people of Islam (Kazagon smiled ironically) sacrifice their lives and for the sake of their strength and braveness gain the positions of Bekks and Amirs.

Taragay watched his father-in-law.

- Does anyone speak Mongolian in your family?

Taragay shook his head.

- Nobody does.

The groom didn't understand what his father-in-law was hinting at. Kazagon continued, shouting:

- You, Barloss, think that your tribe Uima* is related to the Chagatoy family. Would you like to know a story about the Chagatoy family? The serenity and prosperity of Chagatoy and Ugedey were killed like a squealing

swine by the Mongols during one of the kurultays. The adherent of Ugedey, the daughter of Genghis Khan, the queen, was killed as well. Prince Saramun was drowned in the river, and his wife and mother were thrown under the hooves of wild horses. Esumunke, the head of Chagatoy family, was ensnared to the Golden Horde and stab. Suddenly Kazagon spread his hands and asked: Why do you want to be the kin of Genghis? Uigur bakhi* are keeping carefully the genealogy the family of Mongol Aimak. But you, the Barloss family, do not exist there any more. And there is no document proving your belonging to the Mongols. Then Kazagon threw himself on the satin pillows and roared with laughter. He had offended his new "son".

Taragay's face turned red after having heard these words.

- You, dear Bekk, are overstepping yourself.

Kazagon gave him a friendly smile in reply, as if to tell his dear son to calm down. At that moment a question came to the mind of Taragay.

- Bekk, I don't think that you like the Mongols either. If this is correct, why did you break the scone between the daughter of Tarmashirin Khan and your grandson Hussein?

Kazagon glanced at his son-in-law prickly and answered:

- This is the beginning and the end of the matter. My dear son, you are right. I hate the Mongols who robbed and destroyed our houses. Hearing these words Taragay looked around:

- Well, well - father-in-law said - You are looking around. But I am not afraid, I can say that I h-a-t-e them. What must we love them for?! They have burnt our mosques, robbed libraries and made slaves of us ruling in our own lands?! The head of the tribe, the Khan, can only be a Mongol. And what can he give to us, real Moslems? - Pointing a finger at the chest of Taragay, he whispered: - We are ordinary mortals, never can throne. Even if we have power, a Mongol must rule. Our people are afraid still. Is there any end?...

Taragay understood the question and said quietly with a smile.

- Our Amirs, my Bekk, hide themselves in their farmsteads, but aiyars*, sarbadors* have already begun their fight.

Kazagon glowed after hearing these words and said solemnly:

- And at last I am hearing the words of a real man. - Raising his short, fat finger he exclaimed: - this is why I making a kin to Tarmashirin Khan. To get the title of Yuragan-son for my son-in-law, Amir Hussein ibn Musallaba ibn Amir Kazagon. He is my son in-law, my little wolf. I anticipate the realization of my dreams, my thoughts by him . My heart feels that the future of Maverannahr' is in his hands. - Old Kazagon took a deep breath: - my sons don't give me any hope...Slugs!

It was a long time ago but Kazagon's word had deeply touched Taragay's heart.

Taragay had lived fairly well with Iukun-khotun for some years. But she could not give birth to a child. This was the reason behind their quarrels that eventually even led to hatred. His wife felt his animosity, she suffered and her character became bad. She had become vicious and narrow-minded. But the worst of it was that she began to ramble. Hearing voices outside, Taragay went to the terrace to greet any guests, but he saw only his wife's cold eyes. He spat loudly and went back. Sometimes he wanted to beat her, even to kill. But Heaven's anger stopped him. When he decided to marry for the second time Taragay became quiet and more sympathetic towards her. Before his marriage with Teginabegim he had visited his father-in-law Kazagon. Taragay's marriage was by insistence of his confessor. He met him with an unwelcome glance, without greeting and said angrily:

- Well, my dear son-in-law appeared. At last you have found time to see me. I see you are busy with your friend Amir Joku ibn Muborak - you are dancing under new khan's song.

Everything went dark before his eyes; Taragay could hardly keep his rage, and said:

- It is not my fault that Kazagon-khan announced my friend Joku ibn Mubarak the Hokim of Karshi instead of yours - Zengu. And it's turned out, that my friend Joku and khan are neighbours and often visit each other.

Kazagon remarked bitinglly:

- Oh, yes, your Joku is green yet, but his will is to be a Hokim.

Taragay begged Allah to restrain himself, and said quietly:

- You are right ibn Muborak is wise, though, young.

Kazagon burst out, smiling ironically:

- You my dear sonny, better make your wife pregnant, then wasting your energy for defending that snotty fellow.

Taragay snaked, and the blood bumped into boiled. He wanted to say his father-in-law about his second marriage in a well manner, but he felt that this was in vain. Taragay said bitinglly:

- I am a djigit, and I prove it soon. My dynasty will not be ceased and die!

His marriage was successful, and his wife gave birth to a daughter. Taragay got his revenge on his father-in-law. And there was not any place where he went on white horse back crying: "My semen is alive, hear my dear father-in-law". And now thanks to God's will he is waiting for a son.

As for Mongol khan Kazagon, he slipped up that time too. Khan felt a dislike of Amir Kazagon and his followers and began to join other Bekks and Amirs. And it was not the fault of Taragay that khan was nice to his friend Amir Joku ibn Muborak.

...When Taragay awoke out of his memories, he found out that morning had gone already. Threatening clouds covered the sky. Thunder broke out. Everywhere round was anticipating a thunderstorm. Lighting came out immediately - white snake lighted the gloomy sky. One fire arrow stroked a dry tree at the edge of country. The fire lightened Khodjailgar. Dogs howled out of dread. Cows were mooing mournfully, sheep squeezed to each other. Baring the teeth and losing their senses horses were tossing around and the clatter of hooves was spread around with distant echoes.

Young stableman Abdullah with his eyes curdled with horror was whirl- ing straight onto Bekk, he ran just to his master and suddenly cried:

- Oh, Allah! Is it the end of the world?

Suddenly, louder than the thunder and sound of the beginning rain a midwife Anor cried out:

- Master, it is a boy! You should give a present for a happy news.

Taragay kneeled down, raised his eyes to sky:

- Allah Akbar! God heard me. Thank you, Omnipotent!

And just then as if by magic the thunderstorm ceased. Blue sky was uncovered, and the harmony came to the throne again. Birds sang, flowers and trees were fragrant, animals calmed down. Taragay sat down on the step of a porch and pulled up his face to gentle wind. Oh, how he was waiting for this day - with hope and sometimes with fear. He had strange dreams full of horror: he saw how sons of Genghis khan - "Lord of the Universe" - on undersized Mongol horses crossing the river Sayhun came to the bedroom of Tegina-begim and were squeezing out the baby from the womb, braking his arms and legs, or he saw how a strange fellow came up to Bekk and was swinging his sward, and glitter of a steel wedge was illuminating the whole world.

The interpreter of dreams has explained Bekk that his descendants will be rulers and that among his other children he will have a son who will bend the whole world to his will by the power of a weapon.

And on the 25th Sha'ban 736 the year of hijriy^{*}, Temur ibn Muhammad Taragay Bahodur was born. And the wisest astrologer explained: "The arrangement of stars proves that the heir will be the great warrior and wise ruler. When his fate will depend on the position of the star Zuhul (Saturn) he will surpass all the rulers in the world and will conquer all his enemies. When the sun will reach its "forth home" (first- constellation of Aries and after the constellation of Taurus) - he will ascend to throne of great khan and will strengthen faith to Allah on the earth".

Also a great star of Mushtari (Jupiter) will protect him.

On the same day saint Shamsiddin Kulol when reading the Koran stopped on the following lines: "Are you not afraid that God who is in heaven is able to order the Earth to swallow you and it is already moving!" The saint was fascinated by the word "tashshurru" and he said without hesitation "Oh infant, we give you the name of Temur". Father of Turkish Barloss kin brought praise to Allah and read the "Tooborac" sura from the Koran.

Tegina-begim, suffered after difficult delivery was taking rest in her bedroom. Her child slept near her. Her sister Tuglu-Tekin was also there. She

was a widow and lived in the house of Taragay with her little son Hussein-sadr. She was by side of her sister all the time not leaving Tegina-begim even for one minute. Wet-nurse of infant Olja Oim Inaga and midwife Anor were preparing child for bathing. The wet-nurse brought large copper basin with warm water. Anor threw a handful of salt in basin in order to prevent baby from snakebites, from scorpions and from other insects, a piece of clay taken from the walls of mosque - the growing djigit must accomplish his actions under the God's watching, also she threw a piece of eggshell (for protection against illnesses) and some seeds of wheat - he must have enough to eat. Finally Anor with pleasure threw a couple of gold coins and silver ring. Bekk said before the bathing: "Bath my hero son and money is yours, and let the wet-nurse have the ring".

Like an evil shadow Iukun-khotin was silently observing the process of bathing. Pulled aside, she threw a sight towards happy Tegina-begim - no, damnation did not affect her. The oldest wife was ready to howl from despair, lightning of black envy flashed in her eyes. She left taking her thirst for revenge with her.

Olja mildly cursed after her:

- Night owl, still walking around and sniffing out something.

Anor replied sympathetically:

- I wish God could send her a child, her perturbed soul could calm down then.

When Tegina-begim saw the oldest wife and worried - "God, please, do not let her put an evil eye on my son, do not let her bring disaster". As soon as she came into this house as a younger wife she understood - Iukun-khotin hated her. Nevertheless, while carrying her first child under her heart she didn't feel fear; she thought that hostility of the oldest wife is a common family matter. But soon after everybody knew that she was carrying her second child, strange things started to happen. Once she wanted to take a walk in an autumn garden. Going down the porch she noticed a little wooden toy horse - Hussein-sadr must have forgotten it on the stairs. A new young slave (a girl who was taking care of her) ran up to her, grasped a toy and rolled down with a crash. Tegina-begim almost couldn't speak be-

cause of horror - it could have happened with her also, what would have happened to her then? Who wanted her death? Who could have filed the stair? Yes, it was obvious; it was the oldest wife of Taragay who never had a child. Sometimes later after that, dog Taizy bit through snake's head which crept up to Teginabegim's bedroom. She had fainted and could not come to her senses for a while from this terrifying coincidence. Also Teginabegim remembered how girder of summerhouse felt down but a servant pushed her aside and took the strike on himself.

But the most horrifying thing happened when Teginabegim received a letter from her father who was dying: "I, your father Sadr-Ash-Said, am very ill and my will to see you for the last time is incommensurable with anything else. But evidently, the state of my health will not let me see my daughter". Lines were indistinct before her eyes, in deep despair with tears in her eyes she went to Iukun-khotun to ask permission for leaving (that time Taragay was on a military campaign). The oldest wife met her feigned: "Of course, it is sacred duty, especially if he is dying. Go and God be with you, I hope you'll manage it at least before the funerals".

Iukun-khotun didn't give her bodyguard saying that all soldiers were busy fighting in the war.

Hastily packing her things, with dreadful eyes and depressed from the bad news Teginabegim started a trip escorted by two horsemen-slaves and maid. With entreaty in her voice she was begging the arbakash* to spur the bay horses faster and unwieldy arba* creaking its wheels were tearing along a dismal saline soil. Soon, an armed rider started to distil them. Guloms (accompanying persons) slowed down the speed and drawled bows. Recognizing the approaching rider - Moidum - guloms lowered their weapons, happily waved their hands and cried out to the carter: "Slow down, can't you see, he's got some news from home." Offended arbakash snorted: "I do everything as my mistress orders me."

Teginabegim was worried when she saw a servant. Suddenly, one of guloms was hit by an arrow and fell down from the horse. Another one, still not understanding what was going on, but feeling that the danger was close loudly cried out: "Run mistress, run away!" He bowed slowly an arrow

in his left shoulder, hardly holding a silky neck of the horse and not letting the bows out of his arms. Hearing harrowing cry, Tegina-begim jumped out of a cart. When she saw wounded guloms and smirking Moidun, she understood everything: betrothal and deal of mistress and servant, a mendacious letter about her father's death. So, that was kampir - the crone who organized this trick for luring her into a trap, and she has got into this trap. At least her father was alive, thanks God... This thought gave her strength and khonum' rushed to the steppe. The maid behind was running after her, but when Tegina-begim turned back, she saw the girl hit with a mortal sting. Half opened mouth and wide opened eyes of the falling down maid were saying that nothing can be done for her, it was too late. All this finished the mistress off. Having taken few steps, she fell down, crying of feebleness. She convulsively began to tear withered dry grass. At that moment Moidun with a blade in his hands reached her - he has already killed the arbakash. Tegina-begim musing up all the courage she had, stood up, tossing her head and crying loudly: "If I have any sin, then let your sword be my fatal end. But what has my baby done?" Smiling meanly Moidun answered: "He is the main reason of giving the order to kill you." But as he was about to lift up his wedge, he fell on his knees himself. A steel blade stocked in his right shoulder leaving mortal bloody spots. Tegina-begim, thanking the Heavens and gulom who did his last duty, left that damned place and rushed to the well she saw nearby. After her, with dimmed sight, bleeding heavily and behaving like a drunken man Moidun was following. Having reached the well, khonum dimly felt on the wooden timber - she had no strength to fight against the approaching disaster. Worn out from fear she gave herself to God's will and grabbing the iron chain she flew down the thin aperture into a dark precipice. Frozen cold water took her in it's embrace and when an awful thought of death pierced her she almost gave up. But from the pitch darkness of the well she suddenly discerned the stars in the sky, one of them was brightly winking and the mother saw the enticing face of her son to be born in it. "Oh, God doesn't want me to die", - thought the mother. She didn't feel fear anymore. She lifted herself up to the surface and started to push the bucket with her legs convulsively grabbing slippery

chain. Bloodily tearing her fingers, she started to pull herself up to the sacred star. Even Moidun's sword with a sharp blade he threw into the well, didn't frightened her. It drew in the water, not even touching her while it was falling. She could not keep up like this any longer. She was dead-ly holding the gliding metal chain and moving up with a dark abyss behind. Her strength was exhausted, and she moaned with the last breath. Suddenly, the piercing cry of shepherds was heard from above: "Is there anyone alive?" Tegina-begim with weak voice answered: "We are here, we both are alive."

She doesn't remember how she was taken out and for how long she couldn't ease her fingers. She recollected herself when shepherds were looking for the second sufferer in the well, asking about the other one. And she, laughing and crying at the same time, pointed out at her belly saying: "He is here, with me." These shepherds, who brought their sheep for watering, were the men of Joku ibn Muborak, a close friend of Taragay who was that time together with him on a military campaign.

Joku ibn Muborak's wife was very glad to see her. The messenger with the message of serving Tegina-begim after the robbers' attack was sent at once to the house of Taragay. Khonum didn't tell anything about her conjectures. Some kind of tenacious, crawling presence of fear was holding her up, and she kept her pain and sadness inside.

While being a guest and waiting for a message from home Tegina-begim met the wife of Kazagon, he was one of the last of Chagatoy's kin. His wife told her that Tarmashin-khan got sick often and so horde* decided to send Genghis-Mongol for avoiding disorders and fight for the authority. Tegina-begim understood that the wife of a future khan was sitting in front of her, and that she will be a ruler of Maverannah and Kashqadarya in future. When she was leaving, she willingly invited them to her house and Tegina-begim with wife of Joku ibn Muborak couldn't deny her invitation, so they visited her house.

Kazagon's wife, with rosy cheeks, young, hospitable - the feeling of cordiality and wisdom was blowing off her words - had welcomed the guests

"FARHOD" MS
KUTUBXONASI

in a white yurt.* She was fluttering about a Mongol food, its particularities and merit.

Tegina-begim was grateful to a young princess for her warmth, kindness, the young princess seemed to feel the anxiety in Taragay's younger wife's eyes and was doing everything to dispel the guest's sorrow with her simple and easy talk. The dinner was just wonderful. They drank bosat - mare's milk with sugar in it, they also had young mutton's ribs, well roasted and having been poured with amber-color fat. Then they were served with cut pieces of meat, boiled dough, dressed with spices and heady herbs. They also had a melon dastambui* - a big and sweet-scented, but after the rich-in-fat meal the women did not feel its taste.

Tegina-begim liked being a guest at young princess's house so much, that had visited her two times with her friend and she, herself, invited the young woman to her place, to Khodjailgar. And suddenly, Kazangon's wife, having become inquisitively-serious, penetratingly gazing at Taragay's young mistress and fingering through Tegina-begim's hair, sympathetically uttered: "Hope I did dispel your grief and fear. You should not be afraid of anything, do not worry about your child's future. Everything will be all right; you will have a sturdy child. - And, having gifted Tegina-begim with a charming smile, as an adult, experienced woman, quietly added: - Maybe, our fates will meet in our children and we shall become relatives,"-and they strongly embraced each other, as if they were affectionate sisters.

In a month Taragay came rushing with Iukun-khotun. The elder wife in tears embraced Tegina-begim and whispered to her: "Your daughter is in my hands. One word of you - and she will die," - and stepped back with her cunning smile. The younger wife could not tell anything to her husband. In her heart she had a terrible fear for her children.

And now, it was a look, full of intense, everlasting hatred, promising new misfortunes and fears - and especially they were related to the fears for the son, for their heir's future. Tears came bitterly out of the eyes of Tegina-begim - the torments of the future years ran before her eyes.

Chapter II



AMIR TARAGAY

The spring has come to Shahrisabz, the city proved its name. Kesh-Shahrisabz and its neighborhoods were wrapped up by green smoke, on the background of which the poppies were reddening; the purple tulips with tender violet spots shaped the blossoming trees. In two farsangs* from Shahrisabz, in the village Khodjailgar it was a holiday- the boy was born in the family of the Bekk* Taragay. The courtyard was buzzing like beehive. The guests coming from Bukhara, Tashkent, Samarkand and from other distant cities of Maverannahr* were accommodated on a big aivan.* The religious people, imam Shamsiddin Kulol with his retinue, treasurers, mullahs, governors were talking friendly, sitting on a big wooden bedstead covered with carpets. The other guests - ploughmen, hunters, soldiers, craftsmen and other simple people were given the place in the garden. The servants of Bekk arrayed in the new white shirts with nicely embodied belts "belbog" and durable black boots were serving the guests adroitly. Their supervisor was Armour-bearer Khaqqul. The scar crossed his face from the beginning of the left temple and ended at the chin. When Khaqqul grew angry, his scar turned purple and with this his face looked terrible, and that's why the

people tried not to irritate him without reasons. Getting exact orders, the servants adroitly, without hurrying, scurried among guests. The tables were crammed with plenty of delicious food: somsa,* patir, kurmush, dry fruits, sweets, kovurdak, shurbo, roasted meat, pilaf, the vine in ceramic pots, kumis in pumpkin vessels, melons, watermelons.

Khaqqul was on the alert for changing one course by another with an exact ritual. Specially honored guests were met by gaily-excited Taragay.

He had white turban, dressed in a holiday robe "joma" embodied with a golden thread, his legs were embodied with gray boots from camel skin on high heels.

Taragay approached qassob - the butcher, and said:

- Aliqul-shaiton, do the beginning.

The stout, with crest shape nose, Aliqul looked over the tied sheep to be killed and ordered the young servant:

- Let's start from that one, with big fat sack on the tail.

The servant hurried to catch the animal's legs and tried to drag it up to the butcher. That one shouted angrily:

- You mustn't do like this, it is against shariat* - He approached the ram, gliding the golden wool to tranquil. But the ram soul was seized with panic and the whole body was shaking with non-stopping quivering. Aliqul-shaiton stand on the right side of the sheep, turned the head of the ram to Mecca direction carefully, knocked it down and swiftly tied up the front legs. His lips began to whisper the words of the prayer: - Say: "the prayer and my sacrifice, the life and my death, all belongs to God, the Lord of the Universe, who has no equal. This was ordered to me, the first among Moslems. Oh, God! Upon you and on you for God's name! God the greatest!"

- And having taken the knife, the butcher cut the throat of the sheep with adroit gesture. The blood splashed and began to flow from the cut easily. Aliqul-shaiton took the bowl, filled in with fresh blood and drank it with relish taking the bit of the fresh fat and exclaimed: "Oh, take it from my side!"

The feast was lasting for a long time. And when the guests started to leave, each was gifted with sarpo,* with a round bread wrapped into shawls,

sweets. The mid-wife Anor-begim smoked the rooms with a special herb against evil spirits. The fifth, seventh and ninth nights were considered to be the most crucial ones. Close relatives took care of recently confined, didn't sleep those nights and kept the fire. It was prohibited to show a newly born baby before forty days pass after the birth. Anor put round bread, onion and amulet-inside with Koran quotation under the cushion of Teginabegim,.

After the noon prayer Taragay secluded with Shamsiddin Kulol. He wanted to discuss with him his concern about governors.

- When it is the time to go to the war, Taragay is first, but when plunder is shared nobody notices Taragay - he complained passing over a cup with tea to him.- Hoja Barloss, the governor of Kesh city and his suite didn't want to dismount even. You see, he is in a hurry, he is busy. And he is even considered to be the head of our stock. I made him sit at the table almost violently. I didn't mention the necessity of building a new mosque in Hoja Ilgor, though my camel was for a very long time lying on that place where the mosque must be built.

The saint father set the turban straight, sat comfortably and directed his piercing look at Amir.

- Bekk, listen to the bitter truth as it is. You are governor as well as others. As far as you are poor and while your army is small - this satisfies all. But when you start building schools, mosques, madrasahs* - your influence in the society is strengthening. Who wants this? Nobody among your relatives, friends, enemies does .

The servant Nuriddin entered noiselessly,

- Master, do you need anything?

Bekk waved his hand at him.

- Don't bother, take care of the guests.

The servant disappeared immediately. Shamsiddin Kulol continued:

- The position of the stars shows that the powerful king is born. The Persian astrologer, who serves for the one important person in Kesh city has predicted the great future for the newly born baby, too. The Persian ascertains that Temur-warrior will sweep all the kings of Maverannahr and

Mongolistan. You should save your only son as an apple of your eye. And I appreciate your friendship and frankness. I think, - Shamsiddin Kulol smiled, - that the happy days come for us too.

The estate of Taragay was scattered in the center of Hoja Ilgor village. The house was founded on the high earthen bricks. The outward walls were cut through the small square openings in the shape of embrasure. The gate was with simple carving and big ring-locks. There was one more simple building in the yard. It was a guest room. The entrance, terrace, the dinning hall, bedroom were all covered with carpets and comfortable mattresses, and feather pillows were placed everywhere. That part of the house with the outside walls was intended for the men guests while the inside part of the house - called *darun** was intended for women. The meeting room was between two parts of the building.

Behind this two-storied building there were houses for horse riders, and just here there was a small *darcha** - wicket leading to the garden. The big *havuz* (pool) surrounded with high poplar trees was the pride of the host. And the gardener, whose small house was hidden in the heart of the garden, guarded the pool. Behind the rooms of the warriors there was a summer kitchen and the coach house for military and household inventory as well as the room for preserving and drying fruits, vegetables, melons.

On the left from central gates there were numerous rooms for servants, opposite the rooms the huge pots, *tandirs* (ovens of different shape) were. They were used for baking round bread and at the same time there a large amount of wood was kept. There was one small wicket that led to the livestock yard separated into two parts: one of them was for horses, mules and camels and another - for cows, calves and sheep. Just at the same place there were coach houses and sheds for forage. In the heart of the garden there was kennel for watchdogs which were free for all the night around the estate. In the artfully designed cages the steppe birds, quails were, and their tender singing delighted the Bekk and his guests. The vines skillfully trimmed by the gardener twined around the pergola where Amir liked to rest.

Usually Taragay got up early in the morning with a cock's crow. He used to walk around the garden before breakfast, giving orders to servants and in the meanwhile he perfected the sable stabs, dashingly cutting the pickets placed by horse riders. After that he went to his mistress chambers, to greet the awaked Temur who was playing with hanging sable in his cradle. Wooden sable was above the cradle. Having seen that his son plays not very masterly with hanging dagger above the cradle as it was planned by the leader of horse riders Khaliquil personally for the boy, the father smiled with approval: the warrior grew. Even the daughter brought joy, too. Gladness, gladness.... And suddenly the unreal story that accompanied the birth of the daughter Kutlug Turgan-aga came to his mind. Tegina-begim was on the last month of her pregnancy, and that time Taragay met a poor girl with smart eyes and glib tongue.

Several times he met her on his way. Usually, surrounded by suite he passed crossing the nearest village and teenagers and small children ran away and scattered like peas. And only Zainab looked at Amir's eyes bravely and ran after his horse, screaming out with ringing voice: "I want to ride, want to ride on your bay". It was strange and astonishing for Amir to hear these words because the girls in Muslim families were brought up in modesty and strictness. After twelve (and well-developed physically daughters - even after nine) were guarded by their mothers from strangers' look, especially from men. And he thought that it was a striking impudence!

That very day Amir was coming back from his lonely horse riding, and he was full of expectations - his wife very soon gives birth to a baby. He wanted to stay alone with his dreams and pleasant thoughts.

Approaching the village he looked at the road with slight astonishment - it was empty. He felt some disappointment as the girl escaped. At that very moment he started: the girl's ringing voice rang out of the thick crown of pine tree again with her vulgar request: "The honorable Bekk, please, take me for a ride on your horse".

What a shameless girl you are, what a... - Taragay came close, he wanted to strike a shameless girl by a horse whip, but having raised his head and came across the beautiful eyes, and he saw breasts, tight, quivering as if praying for endearment in the cut of her dress.

Amir said:

- Put yourself in order, girl. But the best for you now is to go to the close girl friend and let her tell your parents that you caught on a twig and fell down from the pine tree.

Zainab shook her head negatively.

- Take this, - he said and put a tight-filled purse into her hand. - This is... this is a pledge, but I can't marry you.

- Why? - Zainab was all shivering. - I could be a good wife. Why not, my Bekk?

- Why not? Why not? - Bekk cried out and rode away.

And Taragay had made his mind and breathed with relief. By no means, he should not insult his young wife. Tegina-begim was the daughter of Sadr-Ash-Said, belonging to the high clergy of Bukhara. Many ismons, imams, friends of Sadr-Ash-Said were linked via money deals and people called them "Sadr-Jahons" - the pillars of the world. Sadrs possessed a huge amount of money. Regarding their wealth they could be compared only with influential Amirs. Not a serious business could be managed without Sadr's advice. But the income of Sadr-Ash-Said was very modest and he was fanatically loyal to the shariat laws, he was honest to the Almighty. He tried not to take part in any money tricks. He was respected by relatives and by the way, he was a good screen in some illegal operations. -

His daughter Tegina-begim was brought up in a kind, honest surroundings, and her heart was soft, respondent. Having entered the house of Taragay she was shocked and disappointed seeing the existence of another world, another relationships - archly, sly, rascally, brutal. She suffered and Taragay saw it, but he couldn't smooth the destiny of his young wife away. And Zainab... He often recollected that strange passionate girl..

The thought about his past often made him smile ironically. But he must think about future - all philosophers and astrologists predict him great future. And at his present time there were a lot of joy and happiness and one of the most important - the healthy, lively baby Temur was. Taragay didn't disregard also small joys and anticipated the invitation to take part at

sheep fighting just behind the city wall of Shahrizabz with pleasure. There, on the vast playing grounds, the competition among wrestlers attracted the spectators from the nearest towns and villages. The experts on quails fighting, the racing and dogfights were invited too. Oh, dogs fighting was a special gambling! The Caucasian and Central Asian sheep dogs, the Persian greyhounds and the huge mongrels of different breed with cut tails and ears, the watch wolfhounds attracted many people and each of them was the best expert.

On Friday, after morning prayer, Taragay with small suite - Jumanqul, Mobashar and Abdullah - went to Shahrizabz directly to its suburbs. There, on the big field the passions were boiling. Not only sheep fights were expected, but kaklik¹ and dogs fights as well as camel were expected, too. The field was surrounded by the crowd of experts; each of them encouraged his stake-makers - the owners of the best fighting birds (as they thought).

Abdullah released the steppe bird, cock feathered in purple gray plumage on pink legs, slandered with strong spurs. Letting the cock to the hen, Abdullah gave the time to the cock to chase about beautiful bird and after that he pushed the hen to the stronger cock, which was kept near the same female-hen. Rivals rushed to fighting. Spectators started to stake. Taragay bet with the heavy-faced owner of cock-rival on ten dinars and agreed on the fight without special metal spurs up to first drops of blood and flight of a bird. Taragay was sure in his pet, he trained his pet during the previous month not in vain, perfecting jumps and beak blows. The gamecocks were fighting without scouting, beating to each other's chest and Amir's pet pecked the eye of his rival. Then the birds flew apart, bent down and the flight dance started, accompanied by high jumps, strong blows of paws and beaks. Taragay turned back to look at Jumankul and that one rose thumb - showing that all was good. After some time all had come to an end. The bigger cock, even was disparately fighting, started to lose orientation and blood appeared on its neck. Amir's mood cheered up. Having got his money, he ordered to expose his ram against an old ram-male with horns. The balding master of the ram, hardly holding his warrior, immediately offered a big stake - thirty dinars. Jumankul shook his head with fear,

Mobashar became stockstill, and Abdullah stared inquiringly at his master. Taragay was thinking. The bald man looked from time to time bitterly at Bekk and said:

- Either you or me should win. Let us risk?

- Well - Amir nodded, let's try our luck.

The rams were put aside on a long distance from each other. Mobashar kicked his ram and two bucks with bloody eyes rushed at each other. The horrible blow resounded, the next, second, third... These blows resembled a stone fall. The warriors ran up - and again heavy blow; the legs of Taragay ram bent. The bald man burst into bitter laughter. Bekk spit the blade of grass, reckoned with bald man and mumbled:

- Allah, don't put on us what we can't bear.

But failure didn't cool the gamble of Amir, and in a few minutes he staked for another ten dinars on a white wolfhound. However, it also was a failure. The white wolfhound was not lucky, the giant black dog has bitten through its throat. The boy - the owner of white wolfhound hugged the dog and started to cry and wail over:

- You saved my life and what I have brought you here for?

- Why did you come here at all? - Taragay asked with anger. - Cuddy, I failed because of you.

Suddenly the young man with the torn ear ran to Amir, and pulling out the quail from the underclothes offered to fight.

- Take your way dear, nothing to speak about.

But that one still followed him and whimpered:

- Please, let our birds fight.

- There is no quail with me now - waved as if from importunate fly, Taragay said setting the horse.

At the very moment the youngster clutched the boot of the Bekk and started to wail:

- Dismount, the coward! You scared to fail!

Taragay, twitching the leg, hardly liberated from fingers-claws having caught his boot and then manage to kick strongly over shouting mouth. The youngster threw off but jumped immediately and shouted more loudly.

- Killed!

The guard just hardly managed to throw the poor fellow off, and suddenly the tall athlete appeared from behind the nearest bushes. The powerful neck of dark color like the bark of autumn oak firmly held a huge head covered with a fur hat. Deeply settled eyes looked with mockery.

- I see, Amir, that you beat my Abu-Qosim fearlessly, but have you enough courage to fight against me?

The manner of behavior and the cat-like habit revealed that he was a real fighter. Carelessly taking off his quilted half-silk robe, the champion threw it to the hands of three horse riders, who accompanied him as impudent as their master was. With grin on the face they were expecting for the funny performance. Taragay jumped off the horse adroitly, hurling bridle to Abdullah.

- Where did I see you? - whispered Amir, taking off his robe quickly.

- Oh, remember, among the suite of Amir Kazagon. Did he send you to punish me?

- Nobody sent us!... But you are worthy to teach a lesson - Abu-Qosim continued and his face reminded the rats mug from anger. - Let, Matnazar, trash his ass hot.

Taragay was touching the blade of the steel and he whispered to servants:

- Be ready.

The rivals went aside from the stranger's eyes to the waste ground. They turned to Mecca simultaneously and they were asking in silent prayer for the support of the Almighty. After a while they stepped back on some distance scarcely crossing the steel blades. The Matnazar's nukers pooled the blades out insensibly and were waiting impatiently for the end of the duel. Mobashar looked at Abdullah meaningfully, and the other one nodded in reply - he understood. Whistling, he went back to the horses, - by the way, this was the place where stableman should be, - and, pulling out the cloth from under the belt, he started to wipe up the croup of one of the horses. Duelists watched the stableman suspiciously, but seeing, that their servant was busy with everyday duty, they calmed down. Abu-Qosim started to twitch with excitement and shouted with bleeding lips.

- Matnazar! Do kill him, kill!

And the fighting had started. Giant champion, as huge as a rock, was advancing Taragay and, adroitly handling the blade, supported by emotional shouts, started to press the Amir to the of mulberry tree. Anticipating the victory with pleasure, Matnazar raised the blade very high for the final blow, but supple twig of the tree stuck the blade for the moment, - and this very moment was enough for Amir to spear the chest of the enemy. That one first swayed for a while, first knelt and then fell down on the ground. Taragay cried out the victorious call and abruptly turned to the side of Abu-Qosim.

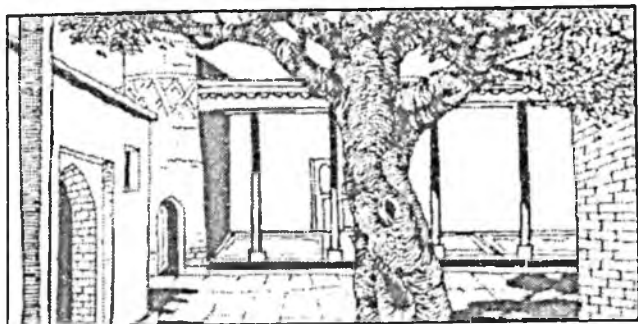
- You asked me to trash his ass, here it is to get!

Taragay circled the blade adroitly, drove it into protruding Matnazar's ass. The yelp of a pig resounded - Matnazar was still alive. Looking over the place of duel Bekk sheathed the blade back and said cruelly addressing the frozen servants of Matnazar:

- Tell my father in law, that if one day he dares to play these games - Amir couldn't stop from scolding violently. - That is - his sweet daughter will hang on the highest poplar... Farewell, and let Allah never else meet you on my way.

They came home late when all had already slept.

Chapter III



SHAMSIDDIN KULOL - THE SPIRITUAL FATHER OF TARAGAY

Fresh strong wind tore leaves off the powerful crown of a tree. And like a fan they covered the ground of the clean seeped court of the mosque. Every day people came to the mosque in Shahrissabz for the prayer. On Friday all faithful Muslims filled not only the winter room, but also the court and sonorous "Allah Akbar" sound shook the ancient walls. Little mosque consisted of quadrangular building with a high tower of a minaret from which muezzin called for prayer, on the western side of the wide court there was a pond and there also was a special room for washing before doing namoz.* The ceiling of the mosque was painted white and blue, and the walls of the holy place were decorated with inscriptions from the Koran. The floor was covered with a common mat. No other furniture was there. There were also hudjras* for imams, sufies, muezzins, mullahs and also for uleims* and pilgrims who came from far places. The library in the mosque remained by a lucky chance. Most of the books were of religious nature but there were also manuscripts written by scholars, philosophers, historians and doctors.

In the far part of the courtyard there was little construction served as a school where the children of the local inhabitants of this mosque were educated.

The imam of the mosque - Shamsiddin Kulol in spite of the early hour was waiting for domulla* Kamoliddin. His mind was occupied with gloomy thoughts. During the long time imam lived and preached in Karshi. And being a young mullah he went for pilgrimage to the Holy Mecca, he had close relationship with local sheikhs, mastered their study and spread it in Maverannahr. But there he met the resistance of the influential sheikh Ubaydullo who was supported by the ruling clique. He had to leave a long-time occupied place. According to the God's will he found himself in Shahrisabz and continued to preach Islam here. Islam was still fragile. That time Buddhism was spreading in Maverannahr in imperceptible manner. The inhabitants of Sogdiana were idols worshipers before Islam.

A saint father came up to the window. The wind blew, it began raining, and large drops were knocking on the glass like God's envoys. Islam as a uniform religion has united and rallied all tribes. The name of the prophet became the symbol of the unity.

The golden age of Moslem education has lasted for more then three hundred years but already in 21st century the reaction against the prophet's study began to be displayed in the world of Islam. The scientist in theology Al-Gazzaliy was the indomitable adversary of Islam. And then later the horde of Genghis khan destroyed all religions - everything was drowned in bloody sweat, and everything was grinning and broken. Imam remembered the words of a historian Ibn-Al-Asir: "I wish my mother did not give me a birth, I wish to die before this and to be forgotten forever." The imam came closer to a stove to smolder coal and throw firewood into it. And many khans and sultanates and especially obstinate Persian tribes still did not accept Islam though they burned their idols with their faith. God is single. The first prophet was Adam, the last one was Muhammad. People got up and went to bed with the prayers from the Koran. They paid tribute to a mosque willingly as well as a tax to a khan. They were afraid of making bad actions as they were sure that all atheists go to hell. And all their sins could

be cleaned out in a prayer. "The prayer is the spiritual cleaning of a man. The prayer is a piece for soul, - thought imam. - Allah sent the prayer to the men from the time of creation of the world. The prayer should be performed as it protects against all shameful and disgraceful deeds. Oh, religious people! Repeat God's name more often and glorify Him in the morning and evening. All existing creatures in the heaven and on the earth apply to Him with their prayers. The prophet said that during the prayer the faithful people are face to face with God".

The slight knock at the door interrupted the thoughts of the saint father, and the teacher of "maktab" entered the room.

- Come in domulla Kamoliddin, - imam invited the new teacher in a friendly manner.

- You are informed that there is maktab in our mosque. We have several schools. Children from Hoja-Ilgor, Teshik-tepa, Sari-tepa, Chash-tepa villages will study here. Now you have to teach the God's thoughts to our children and to impart the laws of shariat to them.

- Yes, of course, my saint father, I understand, - Kamoliddin answered politely.

- You should understand one thing, - imam interrupted domulla gently, - besides teaching mechanical reading, writing, and arithmetic you should convince young creatures that there is no other God but only Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet. Children must know the Koran - the God's affatus. Dear Kamoliddin, you should pass your pupils the conscious servicing for God. I believe that the new followers will be born: saints, sheikhs, generals, rulers, scholars, skillful craftsmen who will carry the banner of Islam proudly through all over prosperous land. Let the peace and calm set in the world!.

Holding his breath, domulla Kamoliddin listened to the saint father. His voice penetrated into the most secret parts of his soul. He was ready to obey imam blindly.

The morning coolness filled in the green city of Shahrisabz. Blessed silence embraced a holy mosque. Golden arrows of the rising sun were shown brightly above the minarets.

Shamsiddin Kulol made early prayer consisted of two rakaats*, between sunset and dawn. Muhammad said himself: "Don't miss in your prayers neither the moment of rise, nor the instant of sunset."

Then he had breakfast, drank hot milk mixed with butter where some pieces of flat bread were put. The saint father took care of his health and avoided every excess: for dinner he ordered a tureen of pilaf or shurpa, as for supper - a piece of cheese or some fruits. The saint father made a timetable for the current week: besides the ordinary everyday service in mosque he lectured on the Muslim law to the students of the mosque; he had also told children about Islam's faith to acquaint children in maktab with the quotations of the Koran, then he had to perform an extensive preaching in the mosque. What else? Yes, he recollected that the kazi* has invited him to the trial over the drunkards and thieves, he should also drop in a prison, set sinners on the right path. "A hard week", - Imam* thought for a while and decided: "There were not so many things to do for him as many people do also...". And he went to the madrassa."

There, outside, on the mats students were sitting. Turbans! Turbans, turbans! Big gray and even striped ones. And his one was dazzlingly white. He closed his eyes for a moment, getting concentrated. Then quietly, but distinctly said:

- The prayer leads us to the road leading to God, the fasting leads to the doors of His palace, and the alms let us into the palace...

I confidently witness that there is no God, but Allah. I witness, that Allah is the only one and has no pals. I witness that Muhammad is His servant and His prophet.

This is how every lecture began. That day he had to give his pupils knowledge about the sacrament of the hajj*-a pilgrimage to Mecca, to the Holy Caaba.

- Have you gone on a pilgrimage? - Al-Islam Abdul al-Malik (one of the most attentive students, a young man with a slightly-seen small mustache on the upper lip) asked suddenly.

Imam was not offended for being interrupted. On the contrary, he willingly answered:

- Yes, my son, and want to repeat a pilgrimage to Mecca in the nearest future. So, I have stopped on the ritual of the small hajj.

He spoke inspired and felt that his words were falling on fruitful soil. The students were listening with respect and a great interest.

- It seems like I need to drink some water, - at last said Imam, guiltily, and one of the students quickly brought a cup of water. Having had a gulp, Imam has concluded: - Well, that is all for today. And now ask questions. Not necessarily about the lectured issues.

- Who is imam? - asked one of the students

- Imam is a mullah of the mosque, a vizier and also God's minister, - quickly replied the most holy.

- How are the mosques supposed to be built? - cried out a lanky young man.

- The mosques are erected by skilled workmen. Outside, beside the doors, there should be places for ablution. The minarets should be joined to the outer walls, not to the interior ones. One of the outstanding mosques in Mecca is Caaba, then the prophet's mosque in Medina. The faithful people should enter the mosque by their right leg and leave it by left one, shoes must be put off. I'll digress from the question a little bit. You better know that you should say "salaam" entering the mosque, even if there is nobody there and even during the prayer. In the mosque one can glorify God, it is prohibited to bow a sword, to carry on a conversation and you mustn't deal by all means.

- Saint father, but Oisha, the prophet's wife, had bought a slave in the mosque. What does that mean? - One of the students interrupted Imam slightly.

- She is the prophets' wife, - the tutor smiled. - This is an exception. But don't waist our time. The prayer is more important thing. You shouldn't pray in bathhouses, in latrines, in stables and near the grave. Also one can't pray in vine cellars, in front of scorching hearth and near animals. Christian chapel is good place for praying when there are no sculpture figures inside.

One youth stood up abruptly and with his low speaking snuffing voice asked to tell about custom of cleaning and about pilgrims - how they do namoz* along their way.

- Oh, my God, - this boy has such rough voice - Imam thought. How on the earth he'll serve as sheikh? "Listen to such voice!

Hiding his discontent Imam began describing the rite of cleaning "at-tahorat"

Imams' throat is parched again of a long lasted monologue, and unknown young murid*, as if feeling this appeared in front of him with a bowl of airan.* Leaving the cup with refreshing juice he whispered:

- Have a drink and enjoy it, - and went away modestly

The saint father was distorted by the sweet, searching smile of murid and he even didn't want to drink at all. His shogirds* also were burnt with thirst. "I'll have patience"-Shamsiddin Kulol thought and went on with his answer. After a while the saint father noticed a smile on his student's face. Puzzled, looking aside Imam suddenly saw a small white kitten that was licking out airan with great pleasure. The saint father's lips freely speeded into a smile. But such tender scene lasted not so long. A quenched kitten ran away safely to the exit, but suddenly trembled agonizingly and fell down with its eyes stared out. The silence was broken by screaming:

- Somebody wanted to poison our Imam! And young people became to run around and screaming in searching the villain. Pale Shamsiddin Kulol whispered:

- You see now, the Almighty wants me to do the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Now he had to go to school where the children were waiting for him making their first steps to the unknown cognition. Their spiritual future was in the hands of their teacher.

Entering the school Shamsiddin Kulol had heard childish shout and rapid blows of a stick. Oh, God! Imam's eyes grew dark, leaning against the old karagach* tree he just hardly came to himself. Parents had told about the cruelty of the teacher Mamatkhalil, and it was evident. He should be replaced or he'll cripple the children further.

He entered the lodging with shuffling gait. In the middle of the room there hanged a young boy with drooped hands, his body was shaking and

childish legs were fidgeting on dirty cloth. Furious domulla Mamatkhalil got to be dumbfounded in surprise with rising stick when he saw Imam. With the lost face covered with smallpox, tangled undone shaggy beard the teacher stood stock-still from fear. Domulla losing his head officiously invited the saint father to sit. He uttered with confusion and seeming to be sorry:

- The pupils were so disobedient that I had to punish them.

Paying no attention on domulla he just with the gesture showed him to sit and began his lesson.

- What was created the first?

The frightened children kept silence pressing to each other. The saint father looked frowningly at Mamatkhalil. His gaze said with the reproach: these were the results of your wildfire diligence.

- The pen was created the first, - Imam prompted softly. - And God said him: "Write that must be created." The fish and the earth on its back were created the first. When the fish was swimming, the earth couldn't keep its balance, and then God created mountains and rivers... What was the main that God ordered? - Imam looked at frightened children with a questioned gaze. Dead silence was in return. The saint father shook his head sullenly, his fingers squeezed a beads, but having hold his anger he uttered neatly: - God ordered to be respectful to your parents, in spite of that both or one of them reached old age and remain living with you. Don't try to neglect and reproach them. Speak with them respectfully. Always be kind to your father and mother. Be kind to your relatives, orphans, poor people, no matter whether they are in close relation or just strangers to you.

Having finished his quotations from the Koran, Imam before parting asked domulla looking at his uneasily running eyes:

- Why don't you like children? Don't you know the commandment: "Don't beat your pupil more than three times. If you'll break this rule you'll will render punishment from God in the heaven"? Good-bye...

After his leaving Imam Mamatkhalil gripped the stick with all his rage and stroke against the filled jug and that broke into pieces, water spilled over. Furious domulla stupidly repeated:

- This poll-goat without horns tries to threaten me, we'll see, who wins...

Chapter IV



CHILDHOOD OF TEMUR

Olja Oim Inaga - a wet-nurse of the heir - took all cares to nurse and look after the newborn. On having played with the son, Tegina-begim gave it to the foster-mother calmly, who put her nipples, full of milk, into the rosy mouth of the baby. Her own daughter spit the swollen brown nipple of a mother out, as she fed up quickly. And Olja Oim Inaga took a great delight in feeding little Temur with her breast. Sometimes while baby was suckling, Taragay entered the room, worrying if there was his first wife, Iukun-khotun. Oh, thanks God! She was not there! The foster-mother, in her turn gave a smile. Amir, becoming calm, receded away stroking his moustache ceremoniously. Olja, looking at Amir, thought that he was worrying about his heir not for nothing. Suddenly she remembered a day, when by chance coming into the nursery she saw Iukun-khotun, bending over the children. The witch had a small bottle of strange shape in one hand, and fingers of the other hand were near the rosy ear of the baby. Olja was coming from the kitchen, where she helped to cook supper and she had a knife in her hand. She rushed at the envious with a wild cry. Laying the knife

stress on between hanging breasts of the witch the wet-nurse whispered with her pale lips:

- God will see, if anything bad will happen with my children, I will kill you...

Wet-nurse told nobody about it, but since then Iukun-khotun had not come closer to the heir as she knew that the heir was guarded by tigress Olja better than any other bodyguard.

In the meanwhile, children were growing up inseparably. Olja Oim used to watch them, their joyful games and guiltless embraces. It was awful to think how they would get along with each other when at last, they would understand who was who.

Once, - Temur was six then, - he noticed frightened glance of Bibi, straightened to the branch of a nut tree. Tuvik - a small hawk - was flying over a pair of cooing doves. Without thinking, the boy took his bow, which was made by Khaqul for him, took aim at a wild bird and shot it with an arrow. Killed hawk fell down at the head of Olja Oim Inaga, who was sleeping on the tahta.*Temur leaned for the trophy and touched thick hair of the wet-nurse, spread on the pillow. Young woman awoke and saw, that young Bekk, taking a red ribbon of Bibi, tied crawliest paws of the hawk and hung it on the branch. Happy and thankful Bibi was clapping her hands.

That impressive, happy picture not only by wet-nurse remembered for all her life; Temur also memorized that beautiful moment for his life long. Something unbelievable had happened in his life which Temur couldn't believe: once, when he returned home from the trip, Bibi didn't run up towards him as usual. She had died and Temur could never find out the secret of her death.

But Temur continued to ask questions people around him, those questions made them to be in a mess: on what star Allah is sitting, why gold is yellow and not white as a snow, and why they did not have this metal?

When Temur grew a little bit, a weapon carrier Khaqul organized "military" camp in the backyard with his navkars* and encircled it with wooden fence. They put four immovable shields for throwing darts, hatchets and

knives, and the "moving" targets were also built: men moved quickly the wooden shields, madcap-djigits trained on shooting at them with a bow. A future fighter was taught a sable cutting, as well as making a secret sortie to the enemy camp, fighting kurash*, climbing the ropes. Everyday exercises were useful, and that is why Temur looked elder his age comparing with his coevals sharing his military game.

After all battles the fights were on a chess field. Temur became a winner in this game too.

Taragay was happy - replacement for new military campaigns was growing. Tegina-begim was glad as well. It was a pleasure for her to cook meal for her son's military host - vegetable soup, milk porridge, fruits, spring water - wholesome meal for future fighters. In her heart, Tegina-begim thought that that food was God's charity; and for this her weak health would go well as her conscience was clear before God regarding the fates of some of the orphans.

Taragay's house was provided with fish and game by the hunter Kahhar - a man with heavy muscles and little hawk eyes. Temur became attached to tracker and Kahhar took him often to the hunt, fishing and taught him a handicraft of righteous person.

Temur caught everything at once. Once he asked the tracker:

- I learnt the behavior of animals and birds, I am able to read their tracks, but how to read human traces?!

At that moment Kahhar realized that the boy needed a philosopher for teaching and not a hunter.

In October Taragay brought young Bekk to school and addressed the mullah as follows:

- Bones are mine and meat is yours - teach him ABC of wisdom.

- Don't worry bekk! - the mullah took boy's hand and brought to elder pupils: - This is a new djigit. - Then he went to see Amir off.

One of the eldest pupils, the strong Abdulatif came up to the newcomer and putting his hand on Temur's shoulder said patronizingly:

- I will be your guardian.

Temur looked at Adam's apple of Abdulatif crossly and took his hands off.

- Oh, look at the son of a jackal! - Abdulatif cried and fell down like a heavy sack on mat at once. Temur learnt during battles how to manage with the enemy.

Deadly silence took place. Children were astonished: nobody could repulse that lanky fellow before.

Mullah Kamoliddin understood what had happened in his absence, he smiled and said:

- Who didn't learn good morals in his youth, he would be left in his mature age. - A tree can be bent as you like till it is young, and a dry tree can be straightened by fire. Did everybody understand this?, - the teacher asked severely.

- Yes, - answered pupils in a chorus.

- Then, let's continue our lesson. Our theme is proverbs. "A pupil is a horse, teacher is a lash."; "Fall as a hero - djigits will raise you up; fall as a coward - hooves will trample you"; "A word is enough to the wise", "Scandal brings enmity, then enmity gives rise to calamity". Well, my pupil, do you see everything? - Kamoliddin looked round the room.

The floor, which the children were sitting on with their legs crossed, was covered with the reeds mats; notebooks and books were on the small, narrow chairs. The mullah was sitting on *kurpacha* at the wall with niches for books and had three sticks of different length - according to the length and width of the room. Over the ceiling a wooden block was fixed to the slat, where guilty pupils were hung, with their head down. Closer to the teacher some rows of elder pupils were, further the younger pupils were sitting. Almost all pupils wore striped chapans on. Richer pupils belt with beautiful embroidered sashes. On the heads of elder and richer pupils gray turbans or fur caps were, the younger ones had skullcaps, the poorest pupils instead of a sash had rope. Lessons at school continued all the year round, and short summer vacations and there were two great holidays - free weeks before and after the holiday. Presence of pupils was not limited by season or age, and children from seven to seventeen year old could be in one room.

"Yes, children are different, but all of them want to get knowledge", Kamoliddin thought and went on.

- I'll tell you what we will study this school year. All studies are connected with the Koran - the code of our life laws; it has religious, lifelong, family rules, historical and moral stories. Knowledge of the holy book is a light to the right road, and it is a spring of alive water. We master the heart - the road of Moslem in life. We are to learn the ABC of two great literatures - Turkish and Farsi. Besides, the mullah suddenly laughed and kidded: - you will master to count your father's sheep. After finishing school you get the title of an educated man.

Temur studied brilliantly. He learnt the ABC of study very quickly and sat over a book for hours, reading about actions of great military leaders. Temur has learnt the Holy book Koran from cover to cover and accepted it with the whole heart.

Soon young Bekk became the first among forty pupils.

Once in autumn mullah Kamoliddin fell ill. Pupils had sudden holidays then. The teacher was ill, children were making noise, it was good to go out from the four walls of school.

Temur asked his father for the permission to go mountains to gather nuts with his schoolmates. Taragay gave watchdogs and ordered Nuriddin severely to watch his heir.

- You will pay with your life, - he said severely, - if anything happens to him, and you can damn the day you were born - added Amir Taragay.

Nuriddin crossed his hands, put them on his breast, and bowed as a sign of understanding.

Gorgeous mountains met them with autumn cool, yellow colours, and just a pine tree grove was seen with its green needle plumage. Mountain stream was beating the big stones, and the sounds were pleasant. On the foot of the mountains few dickers of nut trees, short mulberry tree, a silver leaf djida and light-yellow hawthorn grew. After having unsaddled and giving water to horses they were let to pasture to the nearest meadow.

Temur announced:

- After work we have dinner. Me and Nuriddin will climb the tree and shake the nuts down with sticks, Khudaidad, Gafuriy, Jako and Jaguy Barloss will gather them and put into hurjuns.*

Nuriddin, chose a longer stick and came up to Temur.

- I have an idea, Bekk, I will climb the nut tree alone, while you with your fighters...

Temur's eyes got black with anger and he said severely:

- Seems, you don't understand my words?

- No Bekk, I understood very well. But you will not climb...

The man couldn't finish his words because of the blow against his face and fell down. When he stood up and came to his senses, young Bekk asked:

- Well, do you see, rascal?

- No, - Nuriddin answered firmly. - I will not let you...

The next blow was more terrible and he fell down again. Opening his eyes, Nuriddin spat blood. Tears came into his eyes for undeserved injury - that was the payment for true work. Nuriddin had personal experience of the future ruler's character. Now he understood only one thing - not to thwart the growing Amir.

- My Amir, let it be so, - he got up hardly and bent his head before young Bekk.

He understood, that it was not a game, and he would be punished stronger for any disobedience. Eyes of the ruler's son were a kind of lynx-like and merciless and caused horror to the servant. He had to obey each word and glance to be alive.

By the evening they collected some sacks of nuts. They slept replacing each other on guard.

Early in the morning Jako was sent home to bring nuts and other fruits, too. He was ordered to come back quickly and to bring empty sacks and a pair of donkeys. Having had breakfast with scone and sheep cheese and having drank a spring water, djigits were lying on the bank of the mountain river. Not far from the bank the quails were fighting. A pair of white doves flew to the spring. Djigits were astonished by their beauty. Temur was watching the cooing of doves, and there was no sign of yesterday's rage on his face.

Nuriddin meanwhile was reaping the crops of this rage: his face was swollen up, head was buzzing like an empty copper. Temur has sent Jaguy

Barloss to Nuriddin, for he wanted him to eat a little, but the servant only uttered the prayer: "Oh, God! Let me safely spend this day and the next days and nights, keep me from evil".

Temur pointed at the nearest peak and said with the severe tone:

- I will climb up this rock. Can you see that pistachio tree with an eagle's nest on it? Yesterday a female eagle was feeding her nestlings there.

Nuriddin had dropped and onerously shook his head:

- I will never go with my young master anymore, I'd better stay at home and work as a donkey.

And, in the meanwhile Bekk was quick climbing up to the top. Small rocks were falling down from under his feet. Suddenly everyone has cried - a snake was wriggling in Temur's hands. Young Amir strongly gripping its slender body having turned to his friends, looked down and loudly shouted:

- Oho-ho!

The frightened Khudaidad cried out:

- Throw it away, master!

It became dark before Nuriddin's eyes. Temur, having thrown the snake, shook his hand and went on his climbing. Djigits didn't feel like having fun, they all were looking at the little dot, that was slowly climbing up. Bekk ran against the stone, which could fall down any time, it was good that the hollows on the rock were deep. Young Bekk, having caught hold of hollows, kicked the stone, and the small clod fell down into a ravine almost having touched Amir. Having had a little rest, Amir has climbed up the ledge. The old pistachio tree spread out its faded crown, a bristled up eaglet was sitting in the nest. Fortunately, the female eagle was away. In rage she could peck out the thief's eyes. Having untied the sack, which hung on his belt, Temur threw it over the nestling, and not lingering, began descending, where his friends were waiting impatiently.

And again Temur was climbing up the trees and mountain peaks, and again his suite with a sinking heart was watching the tricks of its "leader". And the second, cold and starlit night stretched over the mountain peaks. They made a bonfire and sat near the fire close to each other. Temur took a cheerful look over the djigits and encouragingly asked:

- Well, which of you is the best storyteller?

- Let me tell the story, Bekk, - Khudaidad softly suggested.

Temur nodded, and Khudaidad having cleared his throat in a loud and shaking voice began his story.

- A peacock and a trot fell into a trap. - Jaguy Barloss maliciously chuckled - what a legend. But the narrator calmly went on: - The trot began rushing around, struggling desperately and then only to get itself free it began to gnaw its paw. Having been free from the trap, bleeding, the trot came forward to the peacock for help. But the peacock, gloriously leaping its tail, refused the trot's help and decided to wait. Arrived hunters had killed the proud bird for its beautiful feathering, and the lame trot became careful and cruel. And since then it has been instilling terror into animals and people. I think, one should always fight till the end, - Khudaidad summed his story up.

All agreed nodding their heads. The next who raised his hand was Gafuriy, a skinny young man, who was picked up by Taragay on the main caravan road. The boy was so sick, that the departing merchants said crossly: we need no donkeys in return, take this young man for nothing, you won't regret, an entertaining djigit, knows many legends. Anor - the midwife - nursed after him with care and he lived with her.

Gafuriy liked to tell stories and knew how to narrate and he was always listened to with a great interest.

- In one kingdom someone called al-Mutadid came to power after his father's death. He did surpass everyone in his beauty, word and manner's perfection, quick wit and the ability to foresee the future. Good luck and happiness were always with him in his military campaigns, and he conquered and united vast lands. With his cunning mind and treachery al-Mutadid could overpass his enemies. For a long time he had a grudge against the Berbers and won them by fraud. He ordered to build a splendid bathing place and invited the Berber leaders there, as though for concluding an armistice. And when they settled in luxurious halls, al-Mutadid ordered to immure the doors... - Gafuriy fell silent, took a sip of spring water and interrogatively looked at the listeners.

- And then, what happened then? - Temur cried out impatiently. His eyes were glittering, and he obviously enjoyed the story about the land conqueror.

- But he was particularly skilled in kindling a fire of quarrel between the people and tribes and among their governors, - the story-teller went on. And when they fought with each other emaciated, he was able to conquer them. His name inspired horror to some people and made others admire, for al-Mutadid has built wonderful palaces and created divine gardens. He set a goal to become a king of the kings!

Suddenly dogs groveling angrily rushed into darkness.

- Salaam alcykum! - was heard from behind the dog-rose bushes. - Take the dogs away, please.

Temur raised his voice, and huge dogs waving their tails came up to the fire. And so did the people. They were dervishes*, and they were three: the eldest was an old man with white turban on his head and white small beard with a crook in his hands. The other Sufi had duppi* on his head, he was wearing chapan and was girded with belbag.* The third one was the youngest one, his eyes were tenacious with life, he was wearing rang and little pumpkin hung on his belt.

- May peace be in your house. Can we warm ourselves near your fire? - the djigits asked.

- Be our guests, saint fathers, - Temur ordered his djigits to prepare dinner.

The youngest noticed Nuriddin moaning at the side, he rose and came up to him.

- What has happened to him? - Not even waiting for the answer, he bowed above the servant - Please, bring water, - he ordered resolutely.

Jugay Barloss brought spring water. Dervish took out the cup from his bag and poured water into it, took out the powder wrapped into a piece of cloth and sprinkled it into the cup. After mixing the potion, he helped Nuriddin to drink it. After a couple of minutes servant's breath became regular, his face brightened.

- Give him this amulet to hang round his neck, - Sufi gave talisman to Temur recognizing at once that he was a senior person.

- Thank you, you relieved djigit. But who are you? - Temur gave a searching look to young dervish.

- We are the members of the order of wandering dervishes, - and the oldest one, the chief of our clan is a sheikh.

That's how fate brought Temur and Nakshbandi together.

In the morning while parting with dervishes, young Bekk gave a donkey for limping sheikh as a present. The youngest dervish - Bakhaaddin Muhammad Burkhan, well known in the spiritual circles as Nakshbandi - invited Bekk to join their order.

- Thank you for honour, saints, but I'll be a warrior!

Nakshbandi smiled:

- Well, then follow your star, young man. And if your star is lucky, you'll be a great commander. That means that we'll meet again...

Days were passing one after another occupied by games, training bows and swords and study at maktab.

Cocvals of Temur, seeing a leader in him were striving after him, feeling power and steadiness of his character. A prostrate Abdulatif with his friend Gulam Ali were always looking for a ground to teach a lesson to this parvenu. And so they decided to beat up obstinate Turkman Hajji Muhammad - for the edification of others. After the classes teenagers gathered at the sandy ground where horse competition and djigits fights were held usually. The elder students demonstratively took off chapans, turbans, long white shirts, neatly folded them up and put under the tree. Being half naked, two persons from the group stepped forward - they were Abdulatif and sturdy Gulom Ali.

- Hey Muhammad! You, a dog's son! Come up here, if you're not a coward. Choose any of us for fighting, - they cried loudly to the crowd of younger students.

Muhammad became pale; he took off his chapan and came out into the circle formed by the students. Temur came up held up by mullah Kamolidin. A crowd of pupils parted at once giving him a way.

- Hey you, vultures, do you want to have some fun, ha?! Do not touch Muhammad, - Temur stepped forward bravely and stood besides Turkman.

Ali who was one head taller than Temur maliciously said:

- Hey you, the chieftain, go your own way. We don't bother you, and you'd better not to stick your nose into others' business.

- He is from my gang, - young Bekk covered Mukhammad with his body.

At that moment the portbelly, lusty Golib - the son of vazir* of Kesh Hajji Hassan Diva - interfered.

- Hey you, little Bekk, who do you think you are? Your father Taragay cannot pay for your study with dinars and always brings wildfowl. You plume yourself with your nobility, but your pockets are full of dust - a fat boy laughed maliciously.

Temur not listening to his words, like an arrow threw himself onto Golib and broke through his belly. Golib fell down on his back, and Temur fell on him. Everybody stepped backward and started to shout, stimulating fighters. Cloud of dust covered everything. Success was changeable but Temur's first stroke predetermined his victory. Golib could not stand up. Temur saddled his opponent holding his throat with one hand and with another one filling his mouth with dust and cried:

- If I have pockets full of dust then you'll have your mouth full of dust!

Someone tried to push away Temur, but he threw a sight burning with anger: - Step aside or I'll kill you!

Gulom Ali who tried to help his friend Golib shook from fear.

Sayfiddin ran up to them and holding Amir's shoulders whispered:

- Let's go Bekk, there is nothing else to do...

At night string of two carts was coming out from Khodjailgar. Teginabegim with her daughters - Kutlug Turgan-aga and little Shirin bek-aga and wet-nurse Olja Oim Inaga set in the first cart; Iukun-Khotun with her servant-girl sat in the second one. Ten horsemen led by Taragay and Temur with his djigits accompanied carts.

Many times both wives requested Taragay to take them to the holy places. Iukun-khotun still eaten up by envy to Teginabegim, wished to trust her grief to Allah and to entreat him to unlock her womb. Teginabegim wanted to thank God for her children. And Taragay himself was not mind

to atone his sins by prayer. They were going to mosque Khusam-ata in the suburbs of Fudin which was two farsangs* away from Nesef.

Saint hazrat Khusam-ata - who was born in Mecca and was a preacher of Islam, found a mosque there at the end of 11th century. This mosque gathered many believers who requested Allah for help and atonement of their sins in their prayers bringing gifts to holy places.

Temur, prancing on the bay horse given by his father, took up the task to guard a convoy very seriously. Three djigits - Ilchi, Jako, Akbuga - the young Bekk were placed by the sides of the carts. Jaguy Barloss was sent to reconnaissance and the fifth djigit, Suleyman, was at small distance behind the small detachment. Temur and his friends were armed with sabers and bows with 30 arrows in the quivers.

The steppe has welcomed the travelers with silence and peace, and only crickets were tirelessly singing their creaking songs. Big and clear stars were shining on the dark velvet sky. One star has fallen down and Temur, while it was still shining, quickly whispered:

- Oh, Allah! You are aware of every thought and dream. I crave for the severe battles, I crave for the glory. Let it be your predestination/

Then a worried scout came up galloping:

- 'Taksir*, I saw the silhouettes of armed people.

Taragay carefully examined the neighborhood and grouped his navkars so that they would not be taken unawares. And Temur with his djigits were ordered to hide in the carts and not lean out, and it was not a home game. Offended Temur has gathered his warriors and explained each their tasks; having hidden under the strong shields, they divided to groups of three, and each group took its position in the cart, got ready with the bows and arrows and waited for an attack.

Tegina-Begin, hugging her daughters with fear, begged her son to be careful. She saw Temur's indomitable intention to fight and defend himself from the robbers.

It didn't take long time to wait for the attack - the robbers watched the cart obviously.

- Urri! My wolves, forward to the booty! - a strapping leader yelled, and the robbers armed with whatever they had maliciously rushed to the carts.

Taragay and his navkars were ready for attack and gave them a furious repulse. But the bandits were too many and some of them have almost approached the carts. And then Temur made an order to his djigits - the arrow hail met the attackers. The robbers, cursing their stupid leader, began to retreat and soon vanished in a dark steppe.

- My son, - the father touchingly addressed Temur. - I see, you became a real warrior. And your djigits are brave persons. I reward all of you with new robes.

And contented Taragay has decided to render a Thanksgiving prayer to Allah - his son was coming up to expectations.

Having had rest in Neseif, small detachment early in the morning started to the Khusam-Ata mausoleum. Temur was devoutly looking at a majestic building, where a saint rested as well as his sons, wives and commanders. There was a pond in the middle of the yard, surrounded by the poplar-trees in which shade Allah's travelers had a rest and did a common prayer.

Temur was impatiently waiting for azan - a muezzin's call for general prayer. And, at last, "Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar! Allah Akbar!" was loudly and clearly heard from all the sides.

Gathered in a cleanly swept small yard of the mosque Muslims were standing in line and meekly answering: "Allahu Akbar!"

Temur had taken part in such a solemn prayer ceremony for the first time, and his heart was thrilling with joy and the great love to God.

When returning home, Temur rode his horse to ride near his father's and said quietly:

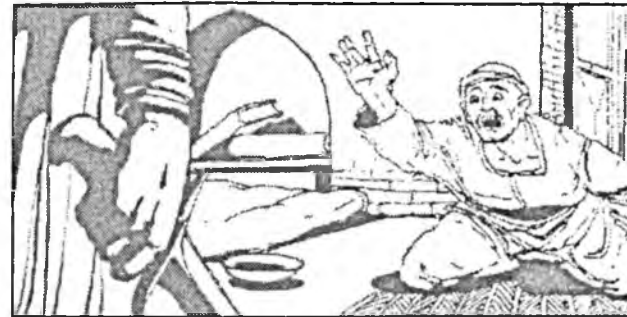
- There will come a time, and I'll invite the best skilled workmen and build the mosque much bigger than the Khusam-ata mausoleum.

And for the first time Taragay said to Temur very seriously:

- You are growing fast, my son. Well, can you catch up with me?

And the two riders galloped to the boundless steppe.

Chapter V



ISLAM - IN ITS MIGHTINESS, POWER AND IMMORTALITY

The scent of aroma roses spread over the luxurious garden and in the morning lilac smoke the delicate refined smell of rayhon* competed with it.

Friday is the special day for the Moslem believers. After general prayer the main Friday ceremony, so-called sermon is performed after the morning "namoz" which is the personal duty for every Moslem. The inhabitants of Shakhrisabz and its suburbs had gathered in the spacious court of the mosque, to listen to sheikh Shamsiddin Kulol. The glory of his sermon on the edge of ecstasy preaching was spread not only through Shakhrisabz but also in nearby cities. Imam noticed by himself that from Friday to Friday the number of visitors was increasing and all people listened to his words attentively, full of faith. Yes, this was the will of Allah - he should pass God's reveals to people, he must help each Moslem to follow right pathways.

It was not so easy to edify the others to follow the true path. You should fully obey to the Almighty, and neither the shadow of sin nor the vice could profane your life. Each sermon was an exam and also the emotion. That

moment Shamsiddin Kulol was nervous even more - he had to uncover the mystery of "The Day of Atonement" to the true believers.

Imam went out to the courtyard where the parishioners stood still in straight rows. He kept silence for a while and then being concentrated said in a low voice:

- Bismi-llyahi-r-rehmanii-r-rahim* - In the name of Allah, gracious and merciful!

The ceremony has begun and was going on as usual.

- Oh, faithful! You, who believed truly, let your path will be straight and your deeds righteous. Because the Day of Atonement will come and only God knows the exact day and time of it...

The servant of the mosque, fadash* entered insensibly, he brought a china teapot and a teacup. After pouring aromatic tea fadash went away moving backwards. Imam nodded his head thanking a servant but he didn't even touch the teacup and he continued speaking. Little by little his voice grew stronger and gathered strength. He warned from the mundane seduction, stigmatized those who had forgotten the God, who shortchanged and cheated in weight their own tribesmen, those who disdained in stealing and making usury as well as those who were depraved. Just like a fire arrow, Imam's words plunged into the souls, and when Shamsiddin Kulol cried out: "Oh, people, foster the fear to your God, because the Day of Atonement will be awful and terrible", one of the parishioners lost his consciousness.

- And remember! Everyone will have to pass along Syrt Bridge - shall be like the edge of a sword and as narrow as hair. True believers, you'll be awarded in the revival day and will find the upper bliss in the paradise gardens among wonderful beauties. And the sinners will be dragged into the hell in collars and they be burnt in fire. And there will be no chance escape from the fire. Then the martyrs will exclaim: "Oh, Malik! Let God cease the punishment!" But no answer will follow...

The young boy of thirteen, who was sitting in the first row burst in sobbing, - his frightened father squeezed his mouth and then covered his head by a flap of gown. Shamsiddin Kulol seemed to be awoken from tran-

Still with the burning eyes he gazed at the young Moslem, and the happy thought came to his mind: "This boy will not choose the wrong way".

Imam got ready to finish his sermon, that day he has decided to finish it with his favourite formula: "In everything I rely upon Allah". But his phrase wasn't finished when at that moment the group of dervishes entered the mosque. They gazed silently with servility at the Saint Father. After the end of ceremony people began to leave, and kalandars* requested Imam to explain some suras* from the Koran.

The saint father answered willingly numerous questions but their curiosity seemed to have no end. Their persistence confused Imam a little bit and at last he pleaded to his tiredness and decided to part with dervishes.

Saribuga - the old soldier who was known to all Shakhtrissabz citizens all the time was the last one who left the prayer and sermon. He was surprised to watch the scene. But suddenly his eyes became round: one of the kalandars slackly stroke the neck of the saint father with the rib of his palm and he became in the hands of the strangers of dusty roads. Saribuga's reaction was immediate: he seized a big stick laying at the ditch, caught up the kidnappers and began beating them on backs. The rage of old soldier was such strong and his hands were so powerful that all dervishes with curses and moaning had scattered leaving the saint father in the middle of the road. Crowd gathered hearing the shout. Saribuga brought water and sprinkled a little to the pale face of Shamsiddin Kulol. Recollected himself, Imam very carefully touched his neck, his lips curved in a painful grimace. Sighing heavily, Imam whispered:

- Oh God, what I have made wrong...

Saribuga swore through his teeth:

- They wanted to kidnap you; I saw with my own eyes how they hit you.

Leaning upon the soldier's arm Shamsiddin Kulol stood up and shook off the flaps of his gown.

- Soldier, you should not suffer from malicious bitterness. Thank you for your rescue. I know who has done this. But only God's wish will come true. You see, God sent you for help to me. I repeat thousand times: "In everything I rely upon Allah!"

No sigh of slight trouble Shamsiddin Kulol showed to people, but in order to recover and gain spiritual balance he went to the library. Such treasure house was collected little by little: history, culture, literature, astrology, medicine and other sciences - all these were intended to the descendants. The whole Eastern wisdom and philosophy were collected there in yellowish pages of manuscripts with morocco binding.

Oh, Orient! Under the gracious protection of Allah the fantastic cities as Baghdad, Damask prospered, the intense trading developed, and the caravan roads led to all cities, the skilled trade-handicrafts achieved their prosperity, even Moslem sciences, especially medicine, became on the top of glory. Oh Allah! Don't let your children lose their true path. Shamsiddin Kulol took the work by Al Gazali "Thya ulum ad-din" - "Resurrection of the sciences on belief". But suddenly the doorman appeared disturbing his reading. Bending his head, he pronounced guiltily:

- Sorry, taksir", a dervish from Bukhara was striving to enter.

Having heard "dervish" Imam remembered about the letter, which he put away in the hiding-place. He wanted to check whether it is at the same place or not. But the doorman waited for an answer and he said:

- Let him enter.

Shamsiddin Kulol came to his reception-room where he usually met visitors and students.

The dervish was young; his wedge-shaped beard fitted his dark face. The saint father glanced at murid* with questioning sight.

- You are too persistent. What's the matter?

- I am very sorry venerable Imam. I have come to you with unusual and secret mission. I am a secret matchmaker, my name is Ali Bahodir.

- A matchmaker?! - Imam was surprised.

Dervish rolled up his eyes and pronounced quietly:

- Just listen, Saint Father, I'll tell you word by word. There is a rich family of duglats* in Bukhara. One of the sons of this family Dovud put his eye on the daughter of Taragay - Kutlug Turnon-oga. Last spring she with her mother went to visit her grandfather, who lived in the neighborhood with a homestead of Dovud's father. Dovud's kin is very rich. They

have houses in Marv and Samarkand. Once this family donated rather vast lands to Nakshbandi^{*} order. And the leader of this brotherhood decided to patronize that youth and sent me here as a matchmaker. And your friend Muhammad Nakshbandi also requested me about the same and he, - the dervish, though there was nobody in the room except them, leaned to Saint father's ear so close, that the blade sharp beard tickled Imam's ear, - ordered for the glory of God's name keep my eyes on Temur, because young Bekk is rather unrestricted in his actions.

Shamsiddin Kulol strained himself - where did he get that information from? But without showing any sign he nodded his head as confirming that the request will be realized.

When dervish bent his head in the sign of respect and went away silently, Imam thought deeply. Nakshbandi was the fifth leader of sufi brotherhood. Khoja Jusuf al-Khamadoni was considered to be the spiritual founder of the order.

Nakshbandi was born in the family of craftsman in Kasr village; his father was a weaver and was keen on chasing. The main role in Muhammad's destiny was played by his grandfather who had close relations with sufies. And it was he who raised grandson's interest to mysticism. The first tutor of Nakshbandi was sheikh^{*} Muhammad Sinasi who before his death offered his Caliph Said Kulol to admit such a smart young man as student, to involve him to the dervish society and instruct him all the rules of mystical learning. Said Kulol was the tutor of Shamsiddin Kulol, and he introduced Imam of Kesh to Nakshbandi. At first, their relations were rather official. Later, meeting each other they realized that they had the same interests. They enjoyed holding a talk on different subjects such as religion, philosophy and literature. When their ways became different Nakshbandi wrote letters to Imam in Shakhrisabz, and received answers. In their letters they discussed all kinds of subjects, some of the Nakshbandi's thoughts seemed too free and even rebellious to Imam.

But the question was why did the order become interested in Taragay's family? Why? Temur himself was the reason of this. Temur was born under the lucky star; oracles foretold him the great future. The young man was

still a child but some political games surrounded him. Taragay, the Barloss's Bekk might occupy the throne in Shakhrisabz or Nasaf by a lucky circumstance, and emir could soon be a ruler of any viloyat* without effort. And further... with his everlasting thirst for power...

Secretly fastening the ties with influential Bekk, the order strengthened its power and worked for its future. But how on earth have they learnt about young Bekk? Albeit... secret agents of the order delve everywhere and know everything.

Having scratched the bridge of the nose with the fingertip, Shamsiddin Kulol decided to look through the whole secret correspondence with the head of the order, and at the same time to have a look at other hidden documents.

Imam returned to the library, he approached the next niche in which the cache was made very craftily. From the first sight it was clear that somebody has already visited the cache. Imam pulled the doorknob, it opened without a key. The cache was empty.

- Oh my God! - the saint father moaned. - They poked their nose here too!

His legs gave away under him and he came down on a hassock. The loss of gold wasn't as significant as the loss of the other letters and valuable documents. It was an obvious danger for many of high-rank grandees.

The doorman scratched quietly at the door like a mouse.

- Come in, - Imam muttered in a doomed voice.

The servant came into the library and announced delicately:

- Amir Taragay has arrived, - and when he saw a pale face of his master, he asked with fright: - Did something happen, Saint father?

Shamsiddin Kulol fully trusted the servant and opened his secret:

- Somebody opened my cache. Some valuable documents disappeared...

Seizing both hands on the head, the doorman murmured:

- I had such feelings. You sent me with commission. But when I returned I saw jorubkash - a cleaning man in the mosque, he was hovering about there. Something aroused my suspicion, and I drove him away. He should be questioned...

- Yes, invite him to my place, - recollecting himself slightly, Imam uttered. - Call Amir here at the same time, the Bekk should not be accustomed to wait in the hall.

Hardly looking at laid-back Imam's face Amir Taragay raised his eyebrows with trouble.

- What's the matter, saint father? You look so dispirited.

- My respected Bekk, the unexpected thing happened. The documents were stolen.

Imam was at a loss in return to Amir's questionable sight.

- Nakshbandi requested his spiritual mentor Caliph Said Kulol to hide some documents away from the curious eyes. They could probably be intended for descendants and history. And Said Kulol gave them to me.

- What are the documents? As far as they are important? - Amir asked.

- In youth Nakshbandi together with dervish Khalil wore down a lot of boots in search for the truth. But usually the ways and roads meet and separate. Very soon dervish Khalil, the brother of Kazagon Sultan, became khan. He was on his throne not so long. And his brother Kazagon Sultan occupied the throne. The reign of Khalil Sultan did not exist anymore but his correspondence with Nakshbandi was saved. But if this former friend's correspondence would be in the hands of ill wishers, then they use documents for the mercenary-evil intents.

Taragay shook his head as if blaming and the saint father became silent again.

- Due to my unconcern I've put Nakshbandi life under the threat. One of the commandments of this brotherhood stated: the members mustn't have any contacts with the rulers. Secret connections with hokims* were and still exist, surely. But there is another thing, my generous Bekk. There were another documents. These...

Taragay interrupted Imam:

- You, saint father, had gathered all secrets of the world in your cache.

Imam sighed but couldn't answer - the doorman came with the cleaning man. He had running eyes of fear and his shaking lips repeated:

- I did not see and hear.

Taragay felt intuitively the participation of that man-jorubkash in stealing; he grabbed the blade out of sheath and ran up to the yard-keeper.

- How much did they pay you, dirty dog?

- No blood, - Shamsiddin Kulol has fussed about, but Taragay went on brandishing the blade exclaiming loudly:

- Now we'll cut off his male dignity and the group of navkars will be sent to his wife to replace her cripple husband.

Jorubkash fell down on his knees and began to crave:

- God was the whiteness; it was against my will...

Taragay has nearly panted of his rage:

- You recollected God, the ass head. Tell the truth or...

- Oh, saint father! Oh, gracious Bekk, - the betrayer babbled. - Don't touch my wife and I'll tell you everything I know.

And the yard-keeper reported everything what was happened, choking with tears.

When the doormau's sister was ill and some days he left for village, jorubkash did some of his duties and he cleaned the library. Cleaning the dust from books, he pressed one plate by chance and it easily opened the cache. And recently, the stranger from Karshi gave him drink and found out about that secret place. He promised to pay the yard-keeper a lot of money for giving him the documents from the cache. First Jorubkash had refused for a long time, but the stranger persistently increased the price.

- Where is that unfaithful now? - Taragay growled.

- In caravanserai, - jorubkash mumbled.

- Show us to that place and pray God the documents were not taken outside the city.

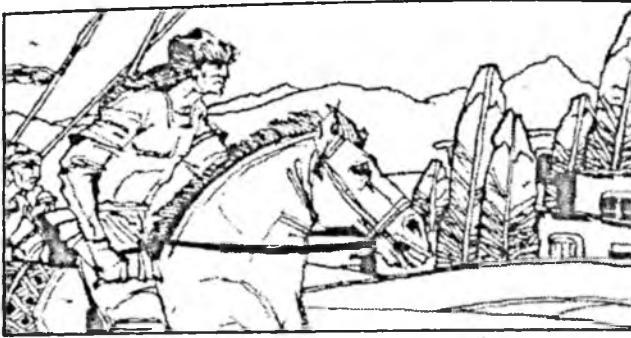
Taragay came in time with his djigits. That time the stealer was sitting in the cell of caravanserai was sewing up documents into the flaps of gown. Having seen the navkars he understood what happens. The stranger snatched the phial out of his bosom rashly and overturned its content into his mouth. In a moment he was in a state of convulsion with mouth full of foam.

Passing letters and documents to the saint father, Taragay begged his pardon for such a cruel scene, where Imam himself was the witness.

Shamsiddin Kulol raised his eyes to the sky and again during that day convincingly pronounced the following:

- All our actions are in God's hands!

Chapter VI



YOUNG BEKK

The sun ran through the village Hodjailgar, which was drowned in the realm of green. The inhabitants of the village worked on the fields and ploughed fields. The cries of little kids filled the village - this was Temur playing with his friends. One of the boy struck the wooden ball with a stick and it flew at a distance whistling and jumping on the ground and fell into havus-pool. It moved to the middle of reservoir. Boys ran to the pool and stopped at the shore, none of them could swim and all boys stood still in indecision. Temur, noticed a malformed sogd ash-tree bowed above the water and he climbed up the slippery trunk and balancing with hands walked through the tree and bended over the water grasping gnarly twigs. He almost touched wet ball with tip of his hand but suddenly the trunk snapped, and Temur fell down into the water. He touched the dirty ooze bottom of the pool and turned himself over making bubbles. His chest was pressed and blood hammered in the temples. When he felt the bottom with his feet and instinctively pushed himself up and coming up to the surface had a breath of air. And suddenly a hand grabbed his clenched fingers. It was Tabib who was passing by accidentally.

Pulling him out of water, Tabib pressed his lips with fear and shook his head:

- You could be drowned, my Bekk.

Temur said coughing grievously:

- Yes my savior, you're right. Not being able to swim, I should not risk..

Late at night, young Bekk found Mobashar and requested him to train swimming. The servant bowed and said:

- All right, let's start tomorrow.

Temur also requested to train his gang to float. Mobashar smiled slightly and said:

- As you wish, your majesty. Your djigits will swim and dive like a fish.

After ten days the children of Hodjailgar were splashing the pearl-like drops of water in the cleaned pool.

Summer was coming to its end and the golden autumn came. Light autumn wind was tearing off the first yellow leaves of trees. But evenings were still warm and full of scents. In Hodjailgar the children as well as adults spent the evening time outside with a great pleasure. Little kids choosing flat playground were playing astragal, using the bones of sheep, goat or cow. Bones were cleaned out of meat and washed thoroughly, that's how kids got dices. Some boys poured lead over their bats and grinded them so that after throwing it, the dice could take advantageous position. Kites were also very popular -those ones like varrak* and parparak.* It took long time and efforts to make them for reaching a better form and prettier than the other kites. Elder kids organized "fights" practicing shooting from bow-strings. Arrows were replaced by especially prepared clay balls. Not far from the boys, in the garden, the girls were swinging and swings were hung on apricot tree-branches. They sang either sad or happy songs.

A couple of young girls played with small stones: throwing coloured stones to the air they caught them either with right or with left hand. Two girls were throwing a ball to each other with a great excitement. The ball was made of the pieces of cloth and embroidered with colored threads. Before throwing the ball each of the girls had to pronounce the rhymed sayings. When Temur appeared in the field, children calmed down, fixing their

eyes on boshbegi. Paying no attention to his "subjects" the young Bekk found Abdullah by his sight and ordered him to saddle a horse. Boshbegi with his friends Jako and Suleyman went to Kesh to celebrate "Kizil-gul".* Quite recently the holiday of vine was celebrated. From the first harvest viticulturists treated with natural grape juice all those who wished. Kesh was famous for its varieties of grapes.

After a while the holiday of flowers "chaman" began when askiya-bozes* and kizikchi* competed in repartee keywords; comics and clowns - in jokes, gymnasts on stilts - in adroitness. Young djigits with branches of jida* cleaned out of leaves and decorated with flowers, candies and dry fruits in their hands formed a holiday procession. Nutty dressed girls ran up to them and strewed them over with flowers. The music played, and the youth sang songs, and careless merriment spread everywhere. And that time at the party Temur ran across a beautiful girl Rukhafziya near one of the creaky gate. Rukhafziya lived in service of two rich women. The meeting of two young creatures was fleeting but young Bekk had time to whisper about future meeting. That made the girl confused, she flamed like a red poppy and closing her eyes, she could hardly nod her head in agreement.

And in the day of "Red rose" Temur moved to Shakhrisabz with his friend. Seeing Temur off to the party his wet-nurse Olja Oim Inaga jealously whispered to Temur's mother: "It looks like our young Bekk has found his sweetheart in Kesh".

In this final holiday of summer there was a tradition to present roses to relatives and friends. Girls had put on smart dresses, dyed their eyebrows with surma and made their cheeks rouge. They organized "girls' parties" on the flat roofs of the houses. They rained gay jokes, teased djigits who gathered near the carved gates. After the afternoon namoz the pole with breadth was lowered in mazor* which was the signal for the beginning of feast. The sounds of surnay* and karnay* were heard everywhere in the streets, well-dressed citizens paid visits to each other with pomegranates, figs and apples for present. And a bunch of bright coloured roses was presented for sure. Merchants warped along the streets calling the

customers: "If you buy sweets - you will not cry, your life is full of happiness", "Please, try these sesame kholva* and honey kholva with nuts, almond in sugar, nisholda!"*, "Here some honey sweets, parvarda* and delicious straws* that melt in your mouth".

Some love affairs were entered that day, and nobody blamed for this - on the contrary, this was even considered as permissible. After that holiday a great number of matchmakers knocked the doors of a moon like faces of girls. Young man sent flowers to their chosen sweethearts, and if the girl had answered positively she presented him fruits and embroidered handkerchief.

The party on the day of "Red flower" was finished in mazor where skilled cooks prepared rice porridge in the big cauldrons and treated those who wished.

Temur had found Rukhafziya near a cherished wicket. When the girl saw young Bekk, she blushed and casted down her eyes. Temur presented her a bunch of big scarlet roses and she gave him a red apple in response with a bright smile.

Rukhafziya was in a modest dress made of a cheap cloth, orange pants, the gown was put on over thin shoulders. She wore a scarf on her head. Quiet a modest girl, she answered Bekk's questions willingly, and from time to time she was looking around with fear. Temur wondered about her being afraid. The girl answered with confusion:

- Kholbuta, the son of the landlady, bothers me. Chasing everywhere, he tries to touch me. He threatens to kill me if I won't obey his will. What I eat - is bitterness, what I drink - is a poison, what I wear - is a shroud. I don't worry about my life, but about yours. Kholbuta himself is like a jackal and his friends are the same. They smoke hash, organize scuffles...

- Don't worry about me, - Temur said calmly but firmly. And added: - And don't worry about your life also. I can defend both lives.

Rukhafziya took a breath and brought flowers near to her dark face. Her thin nostrils trembled like butterfly's wings, straight teeth bared in their whiteness.

- From the smell of roses I have dizziness as if my happy childhood has returned to me - Rukhafziya whispered.

- Where are you from? - Temur asked.

The girl shook her head sadly.

- We have kinship with the people of kashkaits*, who has five big tribes: kashkuli, farsimadan, dareshshuri, shashbulyuk, alame. My kin used to spend winter in the mountains, near the Persian Gulf, which is to the south of Kazerun, and in summer they altogether with the camp went far to the North, to Semirem region. Our kin was rich and united. Once black riders from Seistan rushed in and seized our people in captivity. Then they sold everybody for slavery to different cities.

Temur listened to her sad stories gloomily.

- All your troubles are in the past, now you should request God for bright future...

He did not finish his words when a scream was heard from the house:

- Rukhafziya, where are you, a daughter of ass?!

The girl trembled, looked at djigit and disappeared in the yard.

- Be careful, my Bekk, - her pale lips whispered.

Temur looked to look absently at her - he didn't think his first meeting would have finished in such a way.

It was getting dark. The sky was covered with white apparition clouds. Sunset rays were yellowing the top of the trees. The party was coming to the end. In the mazar two broad-shouldered men lifted a pole up with fixed banner hardly. It would be fluttering till new holiday coming.

Between study and military games Bekk Temur was growing up. He didn't forget the name Rukhafziya. His devoted servant Abdullah saddled horse for him many times and gave him the fastest horse, and djigit rushed across the steppe which was slush in autumn and dry in winter to the city of Kesh! Temur tied his horse at the cherished gate, knocked the hard ring with kamchi*, - with a hope that may be a girl with big black-eyes comes up to meet him suddenly. Unfortunately, an old maidservant used to open the gate and shook her hands sending him away. She went off without answering his questions.

Once in the morning Temur rode to the steppe, he couldn't believe

his eyes, a green silky carpet covered everything. The fresh air stroked his face. Spring! Soon Hodjailgar was buried in verdure the lilac fog: lilac burst into blossom - the Persian, Afghan, Turkestan, and Humalayan; big aromatic flower-bunches (from the snow-white ones to the dark-violet lilac) bowed their fragile branches. People waited for the spring holiday "Saili-Guli-Surkh"- "Holiday of red tulip". On that day the youth went to steppes, mountains and cutting a fresh poplar tree djigits decorated it with red tulips, then they took those fresh flower-beds to the villages and made up waling up along the streets. Girls sang songs and danced folk dances. Only that holiday the young people were allowed to meet and talk without punishment. Usually in the oriental countries young man and a girl could be acquainted with each other only with the help of their parents and relatives. As usual it was happened during matchmaking. Hodjailgar was not a big village but merriment there was like in the city. In the outskirts of the village, on the spacious place the rope-walkers showed their art followed by street acrobats, puppet-showers, funny clowns, wags. There were a lot of different victuals: somsa, boiled tongue, salads, and kazi with onions and spices in dasturkhon. On that holiday a lot of people bled a sacrificial cock and founded a new house with the faith of bright future.

Temur was full of determination to enter at last that house where Rukhafziya lived. His friend Suleyman prompted obligingly that in Kesh in the garden of a strange scientist Olim Hakk the a lilac trees grew. But with a frightened eyes Suleyman shook his head:

- There is such a dog with fangs and as high as a calf. It is better to get without flowers.

Temur asked severely:

- Are you driveller or djigit? I am the first who enters the Eden.

With merry kidding they rode along the green field covered with red tulips. They made their way towards the city. Getting to Kesh they stopped at the fence.

It was not difficult for Temur to jump over the wall. By catlike steps he got to the beautiful bushes and began to break flavored twigs. Oh, such a

big bunch! Young man plunged his face into the flavor, and when he raised his head he saw an enormous wolf-hound. Bekk quickly jumped to the wall, threw the bunch over it but he didn't manage to jump it over and fell down. Lying on the ground he heard savage growl and... dreaded: Such a dog could tear a man at once. He should defend himself. He could close the dog's mouth with his big hand...

- Karabulud, come to your place! - a cry came out over his head. Driving savagely barking dog away, Olim Hakk came to the young Bbekk. - Stand up, my dear youth. Be the guest of my garden.

Temur got up and shaking off confusingly intended to leave, but the host stopped him with gesture:

- Come in, do me a favor - the old man invited Bekk to his house with a sign.

The scholar had graceful face with clever eyes, a curly well-treated beard covered his chin. Long gown reaching the heels with wide loose sleeves was on his shoulders. At once Temur felt sympathy for this easy-tempered man and accepted the invitation with pleasure.

The host's daughter about 28 year old met them in a room. Temur was admired with her appearance - blond hair, light-colored eyes - it was not so easy to find such a beauty in the Oriental countries.

Olim Hakk pronounced with proud:

- This is Roxanne, she came from Samarkand. Her husband is in the campaign; she quarreled with a mother-in-law and decided to have a rest at my place. But my grandchildren weren't allowed to come. - Having seen puzzled gaze of the guest, the host explained. After the death of my first Moslem-wife, I got married to a captive woman from Russia. God presented me a daughter. She's very intelligent, reads much. Her special interest is history, Christian culture. She has a keen interest to the names of Russian churches...

After treating the guest with tea and sweets Olim Hakk invited Temur to the library and brought him to a wooden door, which was the masterpiece of skilled work of great master. The room they entered was also worth to see, especially a ceiling decorated with fine ornament. Niches were full of manuscripts, monographs.

Temur couldn't hold his astonishment that touched the heart of an old man.

- Here, in this house many things were made by my hands, in addition I am engaged in sciences. Have you noticed that all great scientists wanted to master all science at once: philosophy, history medicine, astronomy...? And they achieved the great success in their findings. - The host kept silence for a while, then said with slight regret: - May be I did not too much in the new findings but I have read and learnt a lot. I had special interest in the constructions of mausoleums and mosques. But the greatest success I achieved in carving on gypsum.* In Ismoil Somoni Mausoleum in Bukhara the gypsum decoration with wavy ornament and a kind of vegetable "figure" islami were used. The art of work is inherited by the succeeding generation as a national traditional occupation. Craftsmen know that work with the unprocessed gypsum was much easier. After drying up it became as hard as a stone. - The old man half embarrassed Temur. - Are not you tired of my talk, my son?

In return young Bekk answered excitedly:

- The gracious Olim Hakk, I am ready to listen to you infinitely.

Olim Hakk pointed at one of the niches

- Here the manuscripts, essays on history and geography are written by: Al-Madani, Al-Belazuri ibn Muskaveih, At-Tabari. And they contain rich information about countries all over the world. Here there are also the treasures of Oriental mathematicians - Olim Hakk rubbed a parchment-like leather of his face, wrinkled forehead and smiled cunningly - Do you know, young man, how they call our great mathematician Al-Khorazmi in France-Europe? - "Algoritmi". I have the collection of doston* of outstanding poets. Oh, the library is my pride. - The old scholar glanced at his treasures. My doors always are opened for you, Temur; visit this dwelling place of knowledge. But now let's compete in chess.

After this meeting young Bekk became a frequent guest of the scholar.

But Temur didn't forget for what purpose he came to Kesh. It became dark when he appeared near the house where Rukhafziya lived.

Before he touched an iron ring to knock the door, the gate was opened and a fat-lipped plump woman whom he saw for the first time screamed:

- You, loafer! You came again. She is not here, not! That daughter of a dirty dog made dirty things and that we had to sell her!

- Sell?! - Boshbegi asked puzzled, having guessed she was one of the landlady sisters.

- That's how! - the blubber teased him malevolently, - on the slavery market in Samarkand for a very good prize.

- Whom have you sold her to? - Temur cried out with anger, but the gate has been already closed.

Shocked by the news Temur made his way across dark streets. Suddenly a strong hit kicked the djigit down on the ground and at once his head was in a bag. When Temur came to himself, four young men with cruel faces were standing in front of him. One of them swore menacingly and announced:

- I'm Kholbuta. Maybe you heard? Nevertheless, I had a good time with your sweetheart. What a sweet pretty, as a kholva...

Temur twitched in anger but the ropes were too tight.

- And now we will have fun. Well, my steppe wolves, choose a tall tree and tie the rope tighter on the feet of this dog.

Temur, writhed and said hoarsely:

- A pack of jackals against one man! ...

Dirty abuses and a drunk guffaw were heard in reply, and in a minute young Bekk was already hanging on a strong branch with his head down. The rascals were off, bowling songs.

It became dark before Temur's eyes. He tried to stretch, in order to untie the knot, to swing, in order to catch hold of something, but all was in vain. And there, when he was about to lose his consciousness, he has heard a wagon squeak. Having gathered all the strength, bekk called for help.

- I was riding my donkey and heard...- a ravakash Doniyor who had saved Bekk, said gruffly shaking his head.

Temur clenched his fists:

- Those jackals won't escape from me. And you, a kind man, I will be grateful to you till the end of my life.

...Exactly in a year, during the same "Lola" holiday, Temur with his friend entrapped the gang of Kholbuta and brought them to the same mulberry grove.

- Well, brave man, take your sable out - Boshbeg cried out challengingly and having given a sign to his djigits to stay aside, rushed with a blade to the offenders.

Bekk stabbed at once the first one with sleepy eyes; the second one with a hooked-nose was stuck with saber into his eye. The third - the lanky one and Kholbuta turned to be more trained than their boon companions. But their resistance did not last for a long time. At last, having knocked out the saber from Kholbuta's hands, Temur put the blade to the pulsating vein on his neck and gave a sign to his djigits. They quickly tied up Kholbuta's flabby body and hung him on the bough up with his hand down. Temur, jumping on his horse, shouted maliciously:

- You reap as you has sown.

Tegina-begim fell ill - it was the result of constant stress and fear for the life and health of her children. Temur had to quit school for a while - the mother didn't want to be apart from her darling for a moment. Stomach ache made her suffer, and when pain became unbearable, she held her son's hands in hers and felt better. She constantly addressed Temur:

- My son, I implore you that on wedding parties you should give food intended for you to the someone sitting by your side first. Take third or fourth bowl for yourself. Train the servants first to drink served tea, kumis, sherbet.* And always pray for health, good luck and being forgiven for your sins. - She raised herself in bed and tears slowly trickled down her emaciated face. - Temurjon, how much I want to see your wedding. When I get well, Allah's willing, I will marry you off.

Temur only held mother's hands tightly. He wanted to take all her pains so much. Taragay brought different doctors. Old women kept fumigating Tegina-begim with herbs, crying out: "Kyf, suf", blowing the evil spir-

its off; and old women treating people also came and put a bloody liver to the aching places of the body, doctors gave a mummy, made her drink sea buck-thorn juice. Tegina-begim was slowly dying in spite of all their efforts. The daughters sat beside their mother all the time. Taragay kept praying and was gloomy. Once Nuriddin being fond of his mistress, timidly suggested Taragay:

- Master! There's a doctor with his grandson living on the mountains now; they are from Samarkand, every year this month they collect herbs there...

Temur having heard this conversation, interfered at once:

- Father, let me and my navkars go to find him!

Taragay nodded approvingly

- Come on, son. Probably, it's the last hope.

In three days Temur losing weight and with protruding cheekbones brought the doctor and his grandson. Taragay saw an old man who might be of both forty and sixty year old. Bekk was astounded by black beard, - as a Chinese fan, it covered half of the quack-doctor's chest, his eyes were full of kindness and peace. The doctor instilled hope into the hearts of the members of the family.

Taragay has invited the guest to dasturkhon* to have a cup of tea after a tiresome journey. The old man shook his head:

- First we will examine the patient.

He thoroughly washed his hands, went into a bedroom and sat down next to Tegina-bagim. For a long, long time he examined the patient's pulse, first on the left hand, and then on the right one. He defined condition and functioning of the organs by the pulse. Attentively looking at the housemistress, the doctor gently uttered:

- Well darling, I'm all ears, tell me everything, it's time to let your pain go out.

After having examined her eye iris, tongue and probed all her bones, and even examined her urine, he went out of the room with Temur and explained him:

- According to the external signs she has gastric ulcer, rather old one

and couple of days more - it would've been too late. - An old man raising his eyebrows said: First of all she should keep to diet. No fried food and mutton. Give her filtered chicken broth, vegetables and fruits without seed; it's better to boil them. The doctor took a cup, pulled out a little sack from his khurjun* and finished his words: - For now we'll give her ready-made medicine - and whispering something he put two teaspoons of seeds into piala*, added warm water, waited for a while until the seeds opened and then mixed everything with a little wooden spoon. The mixture became dense like a jelly. - We'll give her first dose now, the second one before sleep and the third one in the morning for an empty stomach. Did you understand me, Bekk? An old man questionably looked at Taragay and he silently shook his head. Doctor started to think out loudly: - Well, what do I have and what I don't? I still have the leaves of aloes, some tashna, lamasery roses; I have also the roots of coriander. I need a helper, - the doctor decided suddenly.

Temur, not even waiting for his father's answer ordered servants to call wet-nurse Anor-begim. She quickly entered the room.

Doctor sent Bekk and Temur to patient and asked Anor-begim to prepare the decoction out of pumpkin peel, kitchen-garden purslane, plantain, barley water, infusion of rice with a fat of one year old goat.

Anor-begim slowly sighed:

- Oh dear God, I'll do everything, just bring to my mistress her health back, - and she prayed touching her face with her both hands.

A week later Tegin-begim slowly started to recover, the pain eased little by little. All members of household were happy when Tegin-begim requested Anor to bring her a mirror.

An old man with his grandson lived in the living-room, they were frugal to food and prepared all needed medicine in separate empty room.

Taragay talked with an old man about his skills during his free time.

- My son, - an old man said, - all my ancestors have done the generous things; they used to bring back to people their faith and love to life. - He touched his puffy beard and went on. - We are philosophers, astronomers and physicians. We are from Khorezm. By our destiny we came to Sa-

markand, our house is in Darg and Suzangaron district. We live near the mosque not far from the market Suzanfurushon." We walked through the whole Burton. We were at the lead string and mountain tract of Amon Kutan; we crossed the mountain pass through the village Kutlug and came to the mountains of Shakhrisabz. We watched the high peaks of Bayankara, drank water from the river Sukhrob. - Doctor looked at his grandson and smiled. - My grandson and me gather gummy, herbs, roots, medicinal fruits, minerals and prepare medicine by ourselves. I'm also interested in astrology. My name is Marlono Ahunad, son of Ahmad of Khorezm, and my grandson is also Ahmad, - and he gently petted boy's head. - We all have same names for our kin not to disappear.

All of a sudden Anor-begim came running into the room nervously, and the doctor couldn't even finish his words:

- Hurry, hurry, come with me! - and she quickly left the room.

In spite of his age the old doctor went sooner than Taragay, and they both ran into Teginabegim's room. And she, happily smiling was walking in her room back and forth. It was the first smile at her face since she has been ill. Temur was standing beside his mother.

- Oh dear God, - said Taragay to Anor-begim, - you scared us to death. We've been running so fast that still can't take breath.

Akhmad-bobo* walked through thick Turkish carpet, took Teginabegim's hands and said:

- Well, I think my mission is over...

Taragay thankfully gave a hug to the old man.

- I won't let you go until you try my reserved nectar-drink.

Mistress sat down on kurpacha and said in a low voice:

- Please, be our guest.

- With pleasure, - said Ahmad-bobo.

Little by little pieces of medicine were collected; drop-by-drop small streams flowed down to the great lake of wisdom. Doctors and tabibs made their contribution for many centuries passing their skill by inheritance, as well. Akhmad-bobo was a collector and follower of the folk medicine.

Akhmad-bobo appeared to be an interesting company. He knew not

only his art of treatment, but history, philosophy, biography of famous scientists as well. In one of his talks with Taragay and Temur Akhmad-bobo told about the well-known bend of law "Avesta". That book was in general about religious hymns and dogmas of people who lived in Iran and Middle Asia in the past. The customs and traditions of the old inhabitants of that countries were described in it. Useful recommendations on keeping health and treating some illnesses were given too, "Avesta" was written on the skin of twelve thousand deer. Taragay, lying on the silky pillows was nodding his head:

- You see - twelve thousand deer!

Temur crossed his legs and listened without twinkling to the story-teller, that all was interesting to him.

The Great Silk Road passed through the cities of Central Asia. The wayfarer often fell ill during the long passages through sands, mountains and forests, in the lack of water, under the burning rays of sun. That's why the caravanseries and hospitals were built on the big crossing passages. Such hospitals were in Baghdad, Damask, Hamadon, Khorezm, Astrobod, Bukhara, and Samarkand. One of the Samarkand hospitals was built in 1066 by the order of ruler Ibrahim Tomgoch Bakhromkhon ibn Nasaf, it was kept at the expense of a state treasury.

There also the medical schools existed, for example, Gundishapur or Samarkand medical schools were at the hospital and madrasah. A famous scientist Abu Tokhir Abdurakhmon ibn al-Hasan al-Jazoli headed the madrasah. The medical school of eye-illnesses of Ali ibn Sino was well-known. A lot of books on different branches of medicine were written. The student, who passed the exams, could be engaged in a medical practice as a doctor. The successes in treating the eye diseases of eastern medicine were great. The outstanding names of Ali ibn Sino, Tuluni, Tabari, who carried out difficult operations and as well as the name of Ibn Al-Haitash who learnt the optics of eyes and zooming effect of the eye-apple segment. The result of that scientist's work was the invention of the eye-glasses.

Temur was listening to the guest without forgetting to treat him. He put him some more tasty slices of meat, filled the cups with wine, and the old

man, by two hands, took it as warming the drink, he drank sipping slowly and said drawlingly:

- Oh, it is really a paradise drink, and he went on his story.

A lot of doctors were very skilled in surgery. So, Abdul Kosim ibn Abbos described in details a number of operations done by him; there were drug stores where medicines were prepared on doctor's receipts. Already that time the names of the doctors from Middle Asia - such as person of encyclopedic learning Abu Nasr Farobi (who was also called as the Eastern Aristotle) were known. In the healing of Beruni "Pharmacology of medicine" the herbs which are known nowadays were described in details.

The servant entered quietly, came up to the master and gave books to him. Taragay handed them over to the old man:

- This is for you, Ahmad-bobo.

Tabib was surprised looking at them with astonishment:

- Umar Khayom! His algebraic treatise and poems. Thank you, Bekk, - uttered the sorcerer being deeply moved. - A true royal gift. Unfortunately, much of his works were lost. Such treasures like books, manuscripts are not valued here; the merchants take them and sell for incredible prices overseas.

"If I was a ruler, - Temur thought, - I would never let any book out of my state. On the contrary, I would build libraries and gather spiritual values bit by bit".

Ahmad-bobo, as if read his mind, said:

- You are very searching young man, Temur, you are interested in science and art.

- And also in the battles and heroic deeds! - cried out the young Bekk.

The tabib smiled and nodded approvingly.

- Do you want to be a military leader? Well, go towards your goal, remain faithful to it, and I like to give you this amulet "Kutlug-Tumar" made of silver and coral. It is yours! When you are in trouble - if you are wounded or sick (let them be avoided!) - push here and then your remedy comes out - a seed - you should swallow it with a spring water. It's a remedy with a Chi-

nese life root, caraway, rhubarb - in general, its composition is very complicated. It will be enough for a long time. And do not forget Ahmad-bobo...

It was the last day of the doctor's staying at Taragay's house, the room where he made his remedies became permeated with the smell of herbs. Temur entered his room to take the remedy for his mother and, to his surprise, instead of a doctor he found there Koidun, Iukun-khotun's servant. Having been caught napping, the slave shuddered, but controlled himself quickly.

- Oh, my master, you are here, - said Koidun with sugary smile.

Temur, looking into the hated person's eyes, uttered abruptly:

- What are you doing here?

The slave put his hands on his chest.

- The great Iukun-khotun ordered to bring a medicine for her, but as the doctor was not there I would like to leave then, my master.

Temur, having said nothing, took a bowl, intended for the mother and was taken aback. Not so long ago he and Ahmad-bobo prepared this medicine. Doctor, looking at a steady surface of yellowish mass, said worriedly:

- Let it settle for a while, and then my son, you'll give it to Tegina-begim.

The liquid potion was boiling up and its colour became bluish-brown. The young Bekk nearly let the vessel down from bewilderment. He was struck by dreadful guess.

- What have you added in there, killer?!

- Nothing, nothing, - whispered Koidun. - You, my master, should prove my fault first, - and the slave rushed to the door.

Boshbegi, having outstripped him stood in a doorway.

- You are a jackal! - He yelled in rage.

The door was opened, and Suleyman with Jako came running.

- What's happened, Bekk?!

Temur threw himself on Koidun and began to strangle him.

- Tell me who had ordered you to poison the mistress Tegina-begim?

The Boshbegi's grasp was hard - Koidun wheezed and his legs bent. The friends understood what has happened and helped Temur to drag him off to his room.

Bekk, breathing hardly, said through his teeth:

- Fortunately, Iukun-khotun is not at home. She went for praying for forgiveness of her sins to a Kesba mosque. To be or not to be, they should take a decision...

- Give an order, Bekk, - djigits cried out in one voice.

...When Iukun-khotun returned home she first dashed to her slave's closet. Having seen hanging Koidun, she cried out loudly:

- It was my fault. God has punished me! He wanted to go with me very much but I refused. Woe is me!

Having heard Iukun-khotun's cries, a stableman Abdullah, shaking his head, said through his teeth:

- By the God's will this happened what was predestined...

In the evening the old healer was leaving Taragay's house. The host handed a precious ring to the tabib - as a sign of gratitude.

Ahmad-bobo shook his head and said mildly:

- Don't be angry, Amir, if I don't take such a precious thing. If you agree - could you, please, give a horse for me and my grandson, - the way is long, and we'd like to get home faster.

- Honorable, this ring costs the price of twenty horses but your wish is my wish, - answered Taragay.

They brought a horse of a light-chestnut color with a black mane and tale; the little Ahmad was presented with a quilt chapon and dagger, and the hostess took out ten meters of cloth.

- It is for Ahmadjon's dower-chest, a gift for his future bride. Thank you, Ahmad bobo, for your wonder-making hands, - and Tegina-begim bowed down to the tabib.

Temur, saying good-bye to the little boy, said:

- You grow up and I will take you to my detachment as a chief doctor, you'll always be next to me. Do you agree?

- Yes, I agree, Temur-aga, - little Ahmad nodded.

Few days later the doctor left their house, Taragay cut a ram and made a "sadaka" - alms for the paupers and disabled people for Tegina-begim's

recovery. Then he took her and children to Kesba, so that they could pray in the mausoleum of Sultan Mir Haydar. And there, by Tegina-begim's insistence they visited a mazor in the village of Kauchin, where the grave of Hazrat Sheikh's with a splendid gravestone was.

They were returning home late at night. Tired Tegina-begim and Temur were in a cart. In such a little moving house, without stopping, one could sleep and prepare the dinner and even read. Couple of trotters, having had rest during the day, were dragging the cart along a wide road. Taragay with guard was keeping an eye on two carts - the daughters and nurses were in the second cart. The night was quiet and starry. The nightingale sang appealingly, passionately, and the sounds were spread over the clover field. A scent and magic of the night awoke tender feelings in Taragay, suddenly he felt as if Zaynab was calling him into a lilac valley - a dear, weird girl. Taragay shook his head to drive away those thoughts which disturbed him. But anxiety didn't leave Amir - he had already forgotten when he was in his wives' bedrooms for the last time. Tegina-begim was sick, and as for the elder one, he felt a disgust when thought about her.

Nuriddin came galloping up:

- Bekk, bekk, mistress is calling.

- What's happened? - But seeing a calm glance of his servant, nodded.

- The mistress is calling, - repeated Nuriddin.

Tegina-bagim reproved Taragay for his excessive care. She carpeted a cart with kurpacha and silky pillows, - and there was a happy smile on her pale face.

- Bekk, we call you for a family council. First, we agreed that I need my own helper, for this you should marry.

Taragay was embarrassed, he had just thought about all this. His wife seemed to read his thoughts.

- Second request is to buy the estate of our neighbours - they are leaving for Shash (Tashkent). They have very good house, a big yard, and a garden. Temur is adult already, it's time to marry him, - she patted Temur on his head, he was near his mother along the whole way.

Bekk smiled, but evaded a question.

- Let all-seeing Allah gives you good health, khanum, then you will see, all our wishes come true gradually.

Taragay often used to go to Zanjirsaroy, to his friend Amir Joku ibn Muborak. His estate was in two-day road from Karshi. In one of those trips Taragay took Temur too, who was delighted by the invitation of his father. He was affected by the long steppe travels very much.

The road, beaten by a hundred hooves was bright with its puddles remained after a spring rain. The blue endlessness of the sky had washed the road and sweet-smelting grasses exhaled their fragrance. Temur rushed, beating his horse by kamchi or he let them run fast and closing his eyes he breathed in fresh air.

Zanjirsaroy was built by Kazagan Khan where he lived with his family and Khan retinue. Not far from the palace a rich estate of Amir Joku ibn Muborak was. The owner of a large stockbreeding farm greeted guests from Kesh happily and warmly, and dasturkhon was laid outside in a free steppe air.

A whole detachment of riders moved to the steppe. Navkars and servants put spread out big carpets, had taken sheep skins with kumis off and airon from the horses. Shepherds cut about thirty of newborn sheep and five-, six-month old lambs.

Taragay presented Amir Joku ibn Muborak with his pedigree white-head bull. The animals feeling as at home ran fast to the herd. The elder bulls rounded him distrustfully with a crowded ring trying to look at a stranger, smelling him and even biting its neck by massive horns. Younger calves seemed to invite the stranger for brawl but white-head one was calm and resolute, then the bull protruded its head suddenly, put its horns in front and butted the most importunate neighbor. Making the triumphant bellow, it ran away to the spacious of grasses. Both guests and owners watching carefully the bull's behavior, burst out laughing.

- This sturdy calf will find a place for itself at the feeding manger, - one of the guests said and added: - I don't understand you, Amir Joke, why are

you keeping such a lot of animals? It is dangerous, save God, - in case of war, the poor animals will be cut off. Isn't it better to sell the herd and turn it into money or gold?

The young owner of the party directing his servants by signs to lay dasturkhon faster had quietly up his head like an eagle, glanced at the steppe. There was mysterious bright in his eyes and his lips smiled softly.

- At morning dawn, when just first gentle rays of the sun touch the earth, and only just birds awake to greet divine morning you drink milk fresh from the cow. A bliss grasps you, you are happy to live, breathing this feather-grass fragrance. - Young Amir Joku was standing; spreading his hands and remotely closing his eyes and rocking slightly. Then, as if awoke, he said pathetically, - By the way in holy books of "Avesta" it was written as follows: "Our power, our need, our food, our clothes, our victory is in cows." As for gold, treasure ubiquitous Mongol, searching for gold, killing rich grandees. Who knows, what a true wealth is. For me, wealth is this spacious land and my herds.

Inviting guests at dasturkhon, Amir Joku ibn Muborak treated Taragay with respect.

- Dear Amir, in the honor of your arrival we are setting dog hunting after hares, then watch the fight of two fighting goats, as well as quail, cock fights, volunteers can make stake for favorite in ass racing. And with you, respected Taragay - we will fight on a chess field, and of course after dinner we will play spikenard; wise poets compare this game with untouchable forces of faith.

Taragay smiled willingly:

- I am always for your service. I see that you don't forget your last defeat.

Host laughed merrily:

- It is always so, if the win is mine - you will never remember my winnings for a long time. - Then he suddenly looked around as if remembered something important. - Where is my dearest Temur? I have a surprise for him. - And he just ordered herdsmen to bring the horses to the guests.

Pointing at seven wonderful trotters, Joku ibn Muborak ordered herdsmen to herd racers right to the guests. Temur was brought.

- Djigit, - the owner turned to him, - if you manage to guess the color of the horses correctly - then they will be yours and if not, my dear - if you can not distinguish the color, excuse, you back it yourself.

Temur began to watch the wonderful animals carefully, whispering something. At last he pointed to the first horse. It was black as it was all black.

The next one was gray with the white tail and mane, then a filly, - Bekk became silent for a minute, - a filly was bay with a red tail and black mane. Stepping forward to the next horses Temur clapped the crupper of the one thriftily. - Well, of course, it was naughty dark-red. - Having looked at the teeth of one of the horses, Temur said rapidly: - Two-year old gray - a mixture of white and black hair. - Stopping before the sixth gallion, young Bekk smiled calmly: - Dun is brown-yellow, with black tail and mane, even there was a dark line along the horse spine. - But Temur stood still as he stopped dead seeing the last wonderful racer and gasped: - It is an akhaltekin' race!

The guests buzzed with approval. The owner of the stocky horses grasped his head and started howling:

- Come on, djigit, you have ruined me just. You managed to guess all horse colors without mistake. - And smiling said: - Take, take them all as you deserved it.

- Temurjon*, what are you going to do with such a brilliant present? - one of the guests asked.

Young Bekk answered firmly:

- Akhaltekin is mine, the rest go to my friends.

Musicians began their work, a music spread over fields as a river song and sounds of birds' wings, there was an expanse and stillness of the endless open space. Temur used to like that music but he was intolerant to test his horse. Expressing excuse he jumped on horseback - really beautiful racer. Under the rider the horse began to dance nervously, but soon they became one - to overcome a spread and boundless expanse around them.

Having rode a lot, boshbegi* let the horse to graze, freely threw himself on the pool of sweet-smelling grasses and dozed off. Soon through his doze he heard a thin voice of a girl, like a beautiful melody. "What a

nice dream!" - Bekk thought. Suddenly the bell-like voice got frightened and stopped. Boshbegi sprang to his feet and naked his saber. Not far from Temur a still standing khonum was with a fear in her eyes. Temur, without hiding his astonishment approached a celestial creation and suddenly saw a rising hissing snake near a strange guest. A sharp strike of his saber and a cut head of a deathly biting snake tangled on the thick high sedge. A stranger whispered stammering:

- You saved my life, I'm your debtor.

Temur sheathed and answered calmly:

- Princesses never are the debtors.

Saved beauty was very surprised:

How did you know of my being a daughter of Khan?

Temur was embarrassed:

- Are you really a princess?

A minute or two they looked at each other puzzled and then burst out laughing. Saroy-Mulk (khonum's name was), knowing that Temur was the guest at their kind neighbors said gladly:

- Amir Joke ibn Muborak is an often guest of Kazagon. But he is often away now, fighting.

- Whom is he fighting with? - Young man was interested.

An angry light appeared the eyes of the princess.

- With Amir Kazagon.

- What?! - astounded Temur and has taken kept the bridle of his horse to hide his embarrassment.

The angry lights disappeared and princess's eyes sparkled merrily again:

- Is this horse yours? What a splendid horse!

Temur came to sense and began to describe its merits.

It has a noble shaped head, tall and thin neck. To increase suppleness of the front legs and neck the colts are fed by grains poured out on koshma. You say that it is graceful? You are right, khonum, - and Temur allowed Saroy-Mulk to fondle a silky mane. - Do you know how they are called? Divine. They are graceful and majestic, and they are known for their fast

and tireless behaviour. Their motions are ardent and light. These horses never let the rider fall down in long way across the deserts. A little food and drink are enough for them.

- Oh, I'd like to ride on the racer. - Saroy-Mulk said quietly.

- Of course, my princess, your will is a must for me. - Temur began to hold in a horse. - Don't be afraid of his beating hooves and fanning hostels, it is just distrustful to strangers.

- I'm not afraid, - Saroy-Muk answered quickly.

Voices came from the far. Worried nurses and teachers were running across the green field.

- They are calling me, - khonum said disappointedly. - My sharp-eyed suite... Never manage to walk alone. Good-bye, Bekk, it was a pleasure to meet you.

Temur rode on a horseback, lashed it:

- See you, a pretty girl, princess Saroy-Mulk.

Soon Temur finished maktab, being ahead of his coevals. Teachers, imams congratulating the best pupil, prepared for him documents for entering the madrasah - he ought to get holy orders. Kamoliddin, admiring young Bekk, stared wide-eyed and said:

- Go to Mecca, my Bekk. After finishing that temple of science you should be Sheikh of all Maverannah.

Shamsiddin Kulol, not covering his admire, presented Temur with a tiny Koran which could be placed in a palm.

- Tell your fortunes with Sura* of the holy book and you will never lose,
- Saint Father whispered tenderly.

Pupils presented their teachers with silky robes and turbans and organized a party. Digits were having fun up to the morning, then they jumped on horses and with whistles rode to the far horizon, as if there was no merry night at all.

Chapter VII



HOSTILITY OF SHEIKHS

What a wild fantasy the clouds have, so fantastically and quaint they painted the sky. The oblique rays of the rising sun penetrating easily through the tousle lambskin curls were stuck in the green dense leaves of the huge garden. The light of approaching dawn covered everything around. The acerbic early air competed with the aroma of the ground. Great number of ditches and small canals gurgled busily and hastily breaking the night silence. And city Shahrissabz - Green city was awakening.

The saint father with his student Barathoja, after prayer walked in the direction of the prison to set criminals right: thieves, fans of hashish, desperate alcoholics. Madikrom, the Chief of the prison and the protegee of Hoja Barloss, with swollen face, blurred eyes had gathered first the drunkards into one of the gloomy wet rooms. Imam thought about Madikrom with disgust - he seemed to smoke opium, easy to adultery and yesterday he overdrank the firewater even. He could hardly open his eyes. And he was lucky to occupy that position due to Hoja Barloss, in that den of iniquity. All these pets were on fat feeding-racks but at least their behaviour should

be more decent as not to make their master ashamed. But these ones only drank and caroused.

Imam looked at “unwitting parishioners” with sorrow and started to tell parables about the broken rules of Islam: “One holy man lost his way. On the way he had seen the house. At the door a beautiful woman with a baby met him and invited to be her guest. She gave him a vine from the jug during meals and said sweetly: Have a drink, my desired”. The guest answered scared: “I am a Moslem, I can’t”. Then she woman pulled the sleeve of his clothes imploring: “Then share this night with me...”

The drunkards started to smile bitterly and started to wink at each other. Imam shook his head reproachfully and those remembered that they were not at the teahouse but at repentance and hid their smiles. Shamsiddin Kulol looked around his “herd” critically and continued his instructive story:

- “Oh, no I can’t break a vow” - moaned the Moslem with tears. “Then you go away. Or kill the baby and then I let you have an overnight”-offered a perfidious woman. The stranger remembered Allah all the time and the hostess sent him out. But after roaming for a half of the night the stranger came back as it was Allah’s wish - to test the Moslem again. He gave up. After having some vine he was petting the beauty all the night long. The awakening baby started to cry and bothered the pleasure, and then the Moslem hit the baby angrily and killed him. As soon as he made it, a woman disappeared, and the Moslem understood the temptation: if it were not the first piala of a vine, there wouldn’t be future crimes!

Baratkhoja grinned, thinking over ironically: “You are, a saint father, so wantonly narrating, aren’t you, who...” -but, got scared with such a seditious thought, he started to examine drunkards sitting before him furiously. They were listening to imam.

- Two Babylon angels, Kharut and Marut got the order from God - to guide people to the truth. But the first person they met on the earth was a beautiful woman. She attracted and enticed them having tempted them by her body. And the angels drank wine carelessly and killed alive creatures. They worshipped another Gods and told the beauty cabalistic code, with

the help of which they ascended to the sky. They uttered these words and told cabalistic name to the beauty. After pronouncing an incantation she flew to the heaven and turned to be the Venus star. And those two angels, for betraying God and unbelief were killed by hanging them by their hair in the Babylon well. The moral was following: the God did not feel sorry even for his angels, and hard drinking was among the worst sins of Moslems. And those ones who drink hard, become hotheaded, embroil friends, brothers and become the source of any evil. The drunkard gets a punishment - eighty whip lashes which are executed at presence of his parents. After that, all gates to paradise are closed for him; no prayers are accepted. Who drinks at first time - his heart becomes black; at second - guardian angel turns his back to the sinner and at last - the God himself turns back. You - imam looked around the crowd angrily - determined the punishment to yourself.

- Let other reviles of belief in - Madikrom ordered the guards.

A thief was caught in bazaar and his hand was cut. And with the absent sight the former threat of the bazaar sellers became quiet and submissive, pressing a stump of his arm to a dirty shirt. The Koran says: "Cut the hands of male and female thieves as with requital punishment from God, because God is all-seeing and wise". And imam had read the necessary number of ayates, having magic power of a talisman. And any thief must repeat these suras till morning, hoping that the sins are to be forgiven. But for all time a thief is self-rejected and recognized by the stump of his arm.

While the guard was letting other prisoners in, Baratkhoja walked around the room several times stooping with chilly.

- I am a djigit, accustomed to everything but I can't bare this nasty dampness, - he uttered chattering.

- But we are not in the Khan's palace - imam said hardly.

There were more then ten prisoners, silent and gloomy-looking. Some looked at imam with anger and the others looked with hope. The imam started his speech toneless:

"We are Moslems, and we are all the children of God. There are seven deadly sins: Unbelief in the Koran, witchcraft, killing, plundering, pecula-

tion of the orphan property, the escaping of Moslem from two non-Moslems, the false accusation of Moslem in adultery. The number of big sins is seventeen. There are three other punishments, - imam exchanged glances with Baratkhoja as both had the same thought: the chief of prison was evidently sinful and deserved God's punishment. But the saint father fighting back this righteous thought smiled gently and went on with his admonition: - I see people here, who had broken the laws of shariat. - Shamsiddin Kulol looked around the people fallen in sins. Some cutthroat for whom an axe was weeping glared at a saint father impudently. But among them those who dropped their eyes down quietly admitting sins were also. Imam breathed sadly and said sorrowfully - Among you there is an artisan who killed his non-guilty wife from jealousy. There is also a soldier who left the field of battle. There is a slave who escaped from his master. There is a peasant who didn't pay tax in time. All you made sins but the day comes when the sky and the earth be changed, and people appear before One God. And then we see criminals with chained hands and legs. The tar will cover their bodies, and the fire envelopes their faces - thus the God appreciates each soul's deeds. I would like to open the door of repentance for you - and Shamsiddin Kulol raised his hands towards the sky. This door is on that side where the sun rises, and this door has two sides made of gold and decorated with pearls and rubies. The distance between two sides is forty-year way for a horse rider. The door of repentance was opened since the day of creation. But repentance takes a long way of praying, for the forgiveness of all sins and non-repeating them again. Never to break the laws of shariat, to hold Koran sacred - are the most important things for Moslems.

Imam turned his head to the chief of the prison all the time being near and asked:

- Are these all prisoners?

- Others are very dangerous, they are chained in dungeon - answered Madikrom through clenched teeth.

- But you should show them to me - the saint father demanded unexpectedly, and Madikrom, damned his long tongue was forced to take the torch and guided imam down the dungeon.

The dampness there was very ill-omened, almost tumular. The prisoner, rumbling the chains, many of them after tortures, tried to raise their heads to greet the imam silently and even to attract the attention at themselves - the crucified man was hanging on corroded chains just in front of him.

- Ali Bakhodir - prompted the chief of the prison obligingly.

The head of Ali rose slightly and fell back on the chest immediately. And only the eyes, for a second seeing imam, happily shined and failed immediately. "A good boy, didn't betray himself, - noticed Shamsiddin Kulol. - He recognized him - he was dervish from Bukhara, the messenger from Nakshbandi - how could he came to be here?" - that torturing question imam asked to himself. He remembered the gay and confident invitation of dervish to be a matchmaker of Taragay's daughter. Could be that he, Shamsiddin Kulol, the mosque and his house were shadowed? And what had Ali-Bakhodir done?! But no matter what is was, by all means the dervish must be saved. All these thoughts flashed through his mind with embarrassment. Having stopped in front of the door leading to that dark underground dungeon the imam uttered quietly but distinctly enough to hear by those who were behind him:

- For today it is enough - and slowly moved back to the exit wrapping his robe.

The frozen Baratkhoja and Madikrom who carried the torch took breath with relief - each of them was dreaming to erupt to the fresh air.

Having wished the chief of the prison the vigilant service, Shamsiddin Kulol sent his shogird* to the mosque, and started to walk along the canal in deep thoughts. The canal irrigated the young sprouts of cotton. It was not the time to leave, he should do something to save dervish from the dungeon with really dangerous criminals. For sure, only Hoja Barloss could help - but where was he that time - in Kesh or Nasaf?

Kesh was a city-fortress with thick strong walls. The city was divided to several parts: Medina was an administrative centre, shahristan was the city fortification and rabid was a suburb with its neighborhoods. There were four gates leading to a city centre: "Iron", "The gates of Ubaidallah", "The gates of butchers" and "The gates of outward Medina". There were pris-

on and cathedral mosque in the centre. In the city there were two gates more: "The gates of inward Medina" and "Barkannan gates". All gates were closed for the nighttime and opened only by the order of the governor of the city and the ruler. Though the whirl of Mongols swept out the solid walls from the face of the earth, the people's hands rebuilt the city and its neighbourhoods anew. The residence of the ruler was out of Medina and rabid in the area under the name of "Al Musalla".

The reception room of the city governor was a huge hall the floor of which was covered by Turkmen carpets. The green carpet runner was stretched from the door to the throne. The glazed lamps which were lightening the hall up brightly were masterly inserted in the hanging chandeliers. The windows were draped with embroidered decorative writings on the fabric from Tiraz with the name of Caliph, as well as the date and the place of the fabric manufacturing.

There were almost no visitors in the palace, and only multicoloured cushions were jauntily thrown everywhere waiting for the governor. At the daytime there was meeting with closed doors and windows, that's why the air was stuffy and heavy, as the servants did not aired the room yet.

By happy occasion for Shamsiddin Kulol, Hoja Barloss was at his office. He had a talk with a governor of Nasaf - Hazrat Ubaidullo. "How inopportunely Hazrat was" - imam's thought. Respectably nodding in greeting the host, saint father looked at Hoja Barloss - a fat man with friable face, whose eyes glint as black small pieces of coal. They always flamed up, when the governor saw beautiful concubines. But that day his look was tired and dimmed; Hoja Barloss was dressed into a holiday light-beige robe made of camel wool. On his head a black lambskin hat with a big diamond was matched to his curly thick beard.

Bushy brows of governor rose astonishingly at the sight of the late guest. Sitting on the throne covered by Persian carpet, he raised hand, and the black-skinned servant in bright clothes stopped to wave the big fan. Two giant bodyguards, with Turkish yataghans on their hips looked as frozen mummies. They stepped back silently behind a heavy curtain, ready to appear by secret sign of the master. Hoja Barloss yawned, apologized and

offered imam to sit closer with a tired voice. Glanced quickly at sheikh Ubaidullo, he asked:

- What was the reason to come to me at such a late time, Your Holiness?

Imam considered not to hide anything and briefly informed about his matter and asked the governor's protection for Ali Bakhodir.

Hazrat Ubaidullo having sat indifferently before this suddenly shook like a golden eagle. He put the hand on the Amir's elbow, as if asking for the sheikh's permission to answer and not waiting for governor's opinion asked full of sarcasm:

- And where do you know the scout from, Your Holiness?

He looked handsome in a silk white robe and snow-white turban, turned many times on the back of the head. And only the expression of his face was foxy. Shamsiddin Kulol was confused by the question asked in a humiliating way. He didn't expect such a turn. He didn't make a sigh and answered gently:

- I know him as a Sufi, glorifying Allah's commandments and respecting Koran deeply.

- No doubts in him being Moslem, - Hazrat Nasaf whispered ominously, - but he was malefactor and had to betray his confederates - added sheikh with his eyes flashed.

- We have good relations with Bukhara governors and, I think, Nakshbandi doesn't have evil intentions towards Karshi governors, - Shamsiddin Kulol answered imperturbably.

- And you, dear, better ought to take care of your children then to protect conspirators, and by the way I've got a complain. I came myself personally to control the words of the offended, - the governor of Nasaf said hissing with a snake smile.

Not having listened to the end imam uttered nervously:

- You'd better question the beaten boys, who are constantly whipped for the negligible faults, then listen to slanderers.

- I know better whom to listen to and whom not to listen. And you are not a man to advise me - not hiding the hatred, Hazrat Ubaidullo yelled. - Where is your piety and confession?

- But what my confession should be? - The saint father asked angrily. Hoja Barloss wedged into the burning quarrel.

- Dear Hazrat Ubaidullo, our Imam is a respected person in the city, he is honored both among the citizens and among clergy and aristocracy. He performs the service well, and I am contented with him. And what regarding the complains - it's your right to check it, and I give my official to settle this burning problem without partiality. We are all interested in strengthening of our great khan's mighty.

- I have no doubt in sincerity of our Imam deeds, - the Nasaf sheikh uttered foxy insinuatingly again. And it was not clear - whether he spoke with a jeer or restrained his arrogance. Irrespective of the imam's interference the Bukhara's spy should be sent tomorrow to the Nasaf tower of death.

- Your Holiness, you have chosen not a proper time for your request. Sorry, and the Almighty see, if Ali Bakhodir is not guilty, he will be free.

Hazrat Ubaidullo, without paying attention to the words of Hoja Barloss, leaned to Shamsiddin Kulol and uttered with a sweet voice:

- I will come to the first Morning Prayer and I hope to see you, too.

Imam Kesh rose, bowed to say good-bye and left the room of the governor of Kesh rather quickly for his age.

After imam's leaving Hazrat Ubaidullo was boiling with rage - since some time he was shaken with quivering and his face was covered with red eruption when only the name of the young Nakshbandi was mentioned. The envy against the wit, wisdom and morals of the young leader of Sufi's were growing in old Hazrat and not only to Nakshbandi, but also to his friends as well as to followers. In sick brains of Hazrat the foul intentions matured. Ali Bakhodir got into dirty hands of Hazrat by chance. Noib wanted to blacken the good name of Nakshbandi by black tar.

Having come to the mosque, Shamsiddin Kulol called Baratkhoja at once and requested to bring Taragay to him immediately. After some time he added quietly:

- Bring him from the back entrance to avoid anybody from seeing you.

Murid never saw his teacher so excited and lost. It was late midnight when Baratkhoja brought Taragay and Temur. The horse riders who accompanied them were accommodated in the neighbouring room.

Temur and Taragay looked intently to the worried face of Imam. The night dream had driven away by night chilly wind - sar, and they were ready to act. Saint person had told everything frankly and he did not mention only the request of Ali Bakhodir about matchmaking to Taragay daughter.

- We must save Nakshbandi messenger - Shamsiddin Kulol completed the night story.

Taragay offered at the same time: we ought to take the prison by assault.

- It does not work, - imam refused Amir's offer immediately.

- It is more convenient and safe to rescue dervish while transporting him to Nasaf, - Temur interfered to conversation - and to imitate it as a simple robbery. Baratkhoja, please give me a pencil and a paper, let me explain the sketch - Temur added seriously.

He drew the horizontal line quickly, connecting Kesh and Nasaf..

- The road mainly is plain, and the major part goes along the left bank of Kashkadaryo River. - Djigit hesitated for a moment and then he started to reason the plan of the prisoner's rescue. - The guards will carry Ali Bakhodir across Kishmishtene where the road turns on the dead-end and changes to the left bank of Kashkadaryo River. It is risky to attack there - Kesh is near, and the help can come any time. Then the road goes further on Oltintena towards Navkad-Kureish city. About eight farsahs* is left up to Nasaf. To put the trap in the area of Kabaliston which neighbours the eastern boarder of Navkad-Kureish is impossible, too. As the area of Kabaliston is in Kesh district - there are a lot of soldiers of both governors - of Kesh and Nasaf. That's why it would be better to attack them in the other district closer to Nasaf, not reaching Kamaitena.

After having discussed the plan, djigit looked interrogatively at the father and the Most High. After listening to the plan of the young warrior they were in consideration.

- Here, behind Kamaitena, is the most convenient place for ambush, - Temur repeated. There are many big grooves of fruit trees, and the road leads through this huge garden. Exactly, in these green bushes it is very safe to hide his people. And, afterwards the attack follows as robbery. We must kill the guards, to make it true - as if it is robbery.

Imam wanted to protest against this violence, but only... waved he hand.

- Let kill Ali Bahodir from fury not having found gold or treasury, to make him take treasury with him next time, - Temur joked.

- How we kill him? - Taragay misunderstood.

- To pretend that we killed him in fury as that the traveler did not turn to be a pot-bellied rich, a but poor dervish without a dinar*. Let's make a fraud, as if Ali Bakhodir is killed and they will not look for a prisoner, - explained young Bekk unhurriedly.

- Let him stay with us - Taragay offered generously - nobody guesses. And afterwards we should send him to Bukhara secretly.

Temur after having listened to his father attentively and moving as a cat approached the Most High and bowed to him gently:

- I request you to be close to Nasaf's noib* tomorrow and your father should be also in sight of people at a palace of Hoja Barloss. But in other respects, please, rely on me, and I rely on Allah's will.

Shamsiddin Kulol hugged Temur and put his hands together rising to face like praying:

- Start on journey, my son and let the Most High help us in true deed - to make guiltless free.

The day had passed in terrible tension. Sheikh Ubaidullo and the governor's official inspected the school in details. By the evening the teacher Mamatkhalil was accused - he had not only beat children unmercifully - he was also exposed for making financial machinations. Gloomy looking sheikh Ubaidullo promised to replace the guilty teacher. The supper had passed in the distressing silence.

In the morning, after prayer imam, counting his beads, was whispering: "Oh God, please teach me what is best for me, make me free from evil, send me kindness. Please, send me deliverance from evil which is next to me".

When parting with Shamsiddin Kulol, Hazrat Ubaidullo uttered as if by chance:

- Don't blandish by your successes. Bukhara birdie can sing a lot about your efforts.

Imam was not embarrassed by threat and looking directly into eyes of Hazrat he answered sharply:

- Sheikh, I hope too, that money stolen by teacher be found one day and used reasonably, - it is a sin to steal from guiltless. The protectors of the robber were mistaken obviously in their protégé. Shamsiddin Kulol bowed with honour and wished a happy journey.

Sheikh Ubaidullo did not answer, he whipped his horse and the suite started on a journey.

The dark-eyebrow lad Sayfiddin, having waited for a long, went out of the huge crown of a pine tree and when the saint father stayed alone came to him quickly and pattered:

- The falcon is at home, everything is all right - and disappeared at once.

Shamsiddin Kulol opened his palms in thankful prayer:

- Thank God! You were, you are and you will be all-mighty helper to your slaves - Imam raised his hands to heavens. - By Allah name, gracious and merciful. Thank Allah who make good to people, depending on his divine help. Thank Allah!

Shamsiddin Kulol with his small suite: domullo* Kamoliddin, student Baratkhoja accompanied by two servants, visited Taragay.

Amir cut the sheep, entertained guests. After lunch the saint father went with the host to secluded place and started the slow conversation. Having walk around the garden, imam got interested in the health of Tegina-begim. Being satisfied with positive answer he asked about deeds of young Bekk. Taragay, slightly embarrassed by persistent attention of the saint father to the young man, answered softly:

- For a while, he is taking care of his sick mother. But in general, Temur is attracted by military games, battles and wars.

Imam continued to ask about the son, knit his brows. Amir hesitated guessing, about authentic purpose of Shamsiddin Kulol visit.

- Well, doesn't djigit want to become a sheikh? - Imam purred in a quiet laugh. - It seems that his destiny is to be a warrior.

Having looked at apricot tree with a hanging quail cage, the saint father followed the singing bird with interest and asked gently:

- Why it doesn't sing?

In response, Taragay shook his shoulders with confusion. Then, Shamsiddin Kulol opened the door of the cage and let the singer out. The quail, moved the wings heavily, sat on the nearest branch not believing the happiness. And suddenly began to twittle, filling the garden with a magic singing.

- Amir, have a look, the bird is singing liberated - imam's eyes astonishingly shined. - By accident, didn't I offend you by making a bird free?

Taragay began to sniff from odd questions of the saint father, but smiled openly keeping silence.

After a pause, Shamsiddin Kulol said solemnly:

- Amir, I want to give a small advice. Temur has outstanding abilities in all fields. His memory is amazing. If the military art attracts him, give the young Bekk the freedom in future. Let him decide himself what he wants to be. Don't prevent him from his military enthusiasm; let his detachment be smoked by war fires. The Most High sends him luck. - Imam thoughtfully looked around the yard and noticing slaves, dragging the logs of wood rouse himself: - Having repair, Amir? May I have a look?

Taragay put his left hand on his chest and did an inviting gesture with the right hand.

The saint father was not lazy to look around new buildings. He advised to strengthen the wall in the women's part and to make the fence five palms taller.

- Let the dogs run around the wall to guard the most vulnerable part - Imam said. You have to accommodate two armoured horse riders in empty rooms to enable a complete security system of the yard. Do you agree, Amir?

Taragay called for Jamonkul at once and conveyed him all advises of the saint father. That one rushed to carry it out with fervor.

- Honoured Bekk, take a seat, please - and imam invited Amir to sit on supa* covered with wool and kurpacha.* Taragay felt that the saint father wanted to say something important, and sat opposite leaning his elbows on the leather cushion. - I want to go for a hajj to Mecca, - said the saint father. - As soon as I settle my money problems, I will start.

Taragay got surprised to such fast decision but kept silence - frankly speaking the first hajj* was made long time ago, but only after two-three time visits to the holy stone Caaba* the hajj is considered to be completed. Imam, as if hearing his thoughts, said:

- Amir, time runs very fast, and it is out of anybody's power. Alas, the life is passing away. But now, the circumstances seem to favour my traveling.

Taragay uttered sadly:

- We have lived under your shade:

Imam interrupted him impatiently:

- Amir, cheer up, there is no reason to worry at the moment but anyhow, we should be careful and wise - this was wished by Allah.

That very moment Kutlug Turkon-oga had ran out into the garden flitting as butterfly. She was in velvet crimson jacket and in orange maiden trousers with gathers at low part and covering feet. She was in light sandals, with a little cap on her head, with finely braided hair falling on her back. The young girl gave food and water to partridges, crooning, she turned sharply and at once having seen saint father embarrassed, covered her face with muslin handkerchief, bowed and uttered quietly:

- We are happy to see you at our house, saint father.

The eyes of imam were smiling.

- And what is this miracle? - Shamsiddin Kulol amazed sincerely. - She has grown so fast. Oh, my moonlike! Come here, beauty - the saint father kissed the forehead of completely embarrassed Kutlug Turkon-oga. - How can you hide this pearl, Bekk?! - At once, imam took the golden bracelet out the inside pocket of his snow-white robe. It was "donador"* with nine inserted coral beads and encrusted with turquoise.

Kutlug Turkon-oga clasped her hands with excitement and looked at her father frightened.

- Take, take the present. It is the same as from the Almighty - and Taragay gave a smile to his daughter.

The saint father stroke the cheek of the girl.

- Just on the point, Bekk, I ought with the groom - Imam said seriously.

- Handsome, rich groom for your daughter.

Embarrassed, but happy Kutlug Turkon-oga, screamed out "Thank you", ran away swiftly.

- Taksir', let it be as you wish, - exclaimed Taragay joyfully and spread his hands. - We are all God's lambs and your word is a must for us.

During parting, the saint father advised Bekk again to look after Temur and keep the suit all the time near him and never stepped aside.

- He is young, hot-tempered, and there are so many envious people around him. - Imam breathed thoughtfully: -I had a dream that your son follows my steps and becomes sheikh. But the fate seems to determine another way to Temur. I want to thank you. - And imam made a prayer from the Koran. - Let this prayer protect your family from misfortunes during my absence and by coming back let me find your children in a good health. Amen! - And hands of the saint person touched the silk beard.

Taragay had also spread two hands touching his face and tough beard, and after putting the hand to the chest bowed imam for his kind wish.

Chapter VIII



MANHOOD

Tegina-begim liked fish, and Temur with his friends often brought her small fish caught by hands taken out of the stones in limpid mountain streams. Once one of the neighbors told the mistress that if to look at the scale fish eyes - then a fish soul will draw liver, stomach and heart diseases away. Temur, having found out about it, asked advice of Kahhor and requested his father for leave, went with his fellows to get bigger fish in quiet backwaters of Kashkadarya which was two day's way to get to.

River flood-lands welcomed djigits with crane cries, the loud cackling of geese on the flood-lands and backwaters, the quacking of the worried black-white ducks and gaggles.

Having unsaddled and hobbled the horses, djigits let them pasture on a small yellow meadow near which they pitched a camp on a solid ground. Gafuri, preparing supper, remarked:

- Nice place for hunting.

Temur answered, thoughtfully looking at a river surface:

- And we shall have time for that as well, but not only for birds - Is it a real hunting? - Entertainment, that's it. And to go for a bigger animal - that's a real fight.

Suddenly from the opposite bank a boat came off and quickly started to cross the river. Temur turned around, raised his hand and whistled quietly. Everyone, quitting the work, looked at Bekk waiting. Boshbegi pointed to the river with his eyes. Khudaiddad, Suleyman, Jaguy Barloss noiselessly rushed to get the weapons and scattered along the river, being hidden behind hills and seeking for good-to-watch places. And Temur remained on his place; he took the saber out of sheaths and touched its blade with his finger. Meanwhile, the boat went through reed thickets and moored to the silted bank. A strong young man in a torn robe and breeches made of a coarse woolen cloth and bare feet jumped out of the boat. He pulled it out on the bank, drew himself up and then saw Temur. First, breathed through the nose surprisingly he became still and then bowed with dignity.

- Peace with you, - he uttered friendly.

- And the same to you, a brave stranger, - answered Temur. - Meet the guest! - He shouted loudly to his navkars. And they, as if there was no strained expectation, egging on to each other began to put the bowls on the dasturkhon.*

After the stranger felt himself as at home after eating some sun-dried meat and drinking a bowl of kumis, Temur decided that was time for questioning.

- Where are you from, what's your name, djigit?

- My name is Abbos, - answered the young man and told his simple story. We were seven in my family. The oldest son is Otabek, then I, after me - younger sister Oygul and four little brothers. Fakhriddin - the son of Olohuiddin - had stolen our sister and raped her, and from sorrow she drowned herself in this river, - Abbos pointed to the reed water-meadow. - Our family proclaimed a bloody revenge; - the voice of young man shook from hatred. - Otabek murdered Fakhriddin, like a foul pig. Then his brother Firdavs buried our parents in the anthill. I killed Firdavs... The father of the dead brothers cast Otabek, my elder brother, under the horse hooves.

I set the house of the tyrants on fire. Angry Olohuddin gave promise to annihilate all our kin. There remained five of us - me and four little brothers; we live in a dugout on the riverbank. That's just the river that feeds us. In winter, honestly, it is very difficult. We hide and wait for a chance to take revenge on Olohuddin kin.

The listeners droned approvingly, every insulted and oppressed person would have done the same in Abbos's place.

- And how did you get here to our lands?,- The fisherman asked Temur timidly.

- We came to get fish, we were sent, - Bekk answered evasively.

Abbos offered his help, and not lingering, took the fishing tackles out of the boat.

- My imps had found a dead horse and we used all its remains - mane, tail, bones - for fishing.

He began to arrange a kursi* - one of such devices, - like a sack with big holes stretched on a triangle made of thick sticks. The wooden triangle's outlet was tightened with strong but thin strings with round holes for catching fish.

Abbos had set the kursi in a small strait, fixed it firmly and said:

- Let a small fish swim away and grow, and let the big one stay in a trap. We will leave out "fish-trap" with bait at night, and now Amir let me go home. - The fisherman, smiled as if apologizing,- My imps are probably worrying; I'll be back soon.

Temur gave a sign, and Jaguy Barloss brought two big bundles.

- Take it, - spoke out Bekk with conviction, - it's for your little ones from us, there are food and clothes that were available.

Abbos had felt a lump in his throat, he could only utter with excitement:

- Thank you Bekk, I'll be back at once, fish is waiting for us.

The fine fellow had caught a pile of fish till the next noon. The lion's share of that rich catch belonged to Abbos, and when Temur handed him two dinars, his friends nodded approvingly, saying: "Right Bekk, the djigit has deserved it."

There appeared a shadow of perplexity on Abbos's face.

- How can you? You are my guests; don't make me feel bad, - and he refused to take money.

The young Amir looked at Abbos carefully and cried out to Suleyman gathering the fish into the sacks:

- You will take catch home alone, be careful on the way, and tell the father that we will be late. - And addressed Abbos: - How long the way to the house of your offenders is?

He answered anxiously:

- About five farsahs.*

- Suleiman, do you hear? In four-five days we will be back home. Tell them not to worry.

Having gathered his djigits, Temur organized a council and Abbos was requested to draw a map of Olohuiddin's house. The fisherman, drawing with his finger on sand with concentration, was explaining his scrawls. Temur asked about Olohuiddin's weakest spot.

- Greediness and fear, - answered Abbos, - he fears for his sheep very much and so keeps a good guard and many dogs.

- I see, - replied Bekk, - we will take the sheep away. - And having stared at one point with an unwinding glance went into thoughts.

The friends who knew their boshbegi let Abbos with gestures know that he should go aside.

- Don't distract our leader while thinkinking, - djigits whispered with respect.

In a while Temur has shouted:

- Abbos, bring your brothers and find four cats for me. Can you get them? - Bekk looked at the fisherman with an inquiring look.

The fisherman answered in perplexity:

- Here you can find plenty of them.

- Well, go and find four cats and put them in different sacks. - And having remembered something, he has cried out: - Oh, yes, do we have oil? - Having heard an affirmative reply of Jaguy Barloss, boshbegi carefully looked at everybody and ordered: Let's go, time flies.

At midnight they came galloping to the village Sultonobod, tied the horses at the branchy plane tree at the edge, having left the guard with one of Abbos's little brothers. They got to Olohuiddin's house through the kitchen gardens and melon plantation and lied down in a dried ditch. Olohuiddin's farmstead was deeply asleep, and Temur, after waiting for a little, ordered to throw one of the cats into the yard. Jaguy Barloss, having swayed his arm, threw the screaming creature over the high wall and ran off to the ditch. The cat got out of an untied sack and there began something unimaginable in the yard: dogs barked wildly, hearing their barking the watchmen came running, and their cries were drowned by cat meowing and dog growling. Having found out that it was the four-legged animal that made such a disturbance and noise, one of the servants threw the cat down a tree. Adroitly growling dogs lay down in their kennels again, and servants went away to their cells shouting at them. Dead silence embraced the whole farmstead again.

Bekk nodded his head, and Abbos threw the second cat over the wall. Again the courtyard was filled with choking dogs' bark and again the peaceful dreams of guloms were disturbed. And the estate was for a long time illuminated with torches and was echoed the threatening of the host. The second cat was hovering around the courtyard, but it was also caught and killed.

When the peaceful silence came again, Khudaidad had thrown the third cat into the yard. And again everybody began to spin round and pattered about - the cat wheezing of fear was running round as scalded, the fierce dogs were chasing it, wild-like servants ran after dogs. Guloms opened the gates and looked around. Temur with his small squad pressed themselves down to the dry ground of a ditch, waiting silently till noisy fuss stopped. Having noticed nothing suspicious, the servants shouted the door and the gate-locks began rattling.

- You witless jackals will put a place in order or not, can your boss sleep quietly? Everybody will be killed - the voice was heard from near the gate to the deep of yard.

The cat was not even being found - apparently, it managed to escape in such bustle.

The next tranquility period settled. Temur grinned, stabbed the last cat with a dagger and threw it over the fence. The cat was so screaming from pain that even djigits grew numb of its wild squeal. The howling of dogs was not less terrible. The landlord began to swear with hard evil.

At last they saw the miserable animal and decided not to pay attention to the cat. They drove dogs to their kennels with great difficulty, and Temur with friends have heard irritated voice of Olohuiddin:

- We have never had these creatures in our farmstead and it's not spring yet, it's not time for cat's weddings, how could they appear here?

- My boss, it seems to me that one of the village suffered from a predatory raid and that's why all these creatures have scattered along the district in searching the food, - one of the servants assumed.

- Maybe you are right, Badal, and God forbid that these cats will not find shelter here! - Olohuiddin said anxiously and added with anger: - I'm tired from this hubbub, can I have a rest, Badal or not?

- Yes, you will my boss, - frightened voice of the servant resounded. - Have a nice sleep, the dogs will not bark anymore.

Again having shouted at the dogs, servants went away to their huts. Very soon only the croaking of a frogs and distant howl of jackal could be heard.

With gesture Temur beckoned all djigits to him, and handed oil to Gafuri.

- You'll pass along the side street, - boshbegi whispered, - then oil the gate facing a cattle-yard and wait till the locks get be filled with oil. Then open the gate and wait together with Abbos's young brothers till sheep appear. And then lead the flock along the side-street up to the dead end without any haste and noise; accompany this flock right to the platan tree. - This side-street straights up to that old tree. Jaguy Barloss you'll go ahead, if somebody blocks up your way - you should take him away without mercy. Khudaidad, - Bekk addressed his best friend - keep you eye on central street and the big gate. If somebody comes in - shout his mouth or we loose.

Djigits nodded their heads showing that everything was clear.

- Abbos, have you got hook and rope? Temur addressed the fisherman in a low voice. - We two will go to the sheep's enclosure. - Abbos raised his hand to show that all was right. Let God bless all of our deeds.

And djigits having uttered "Amen" disappeared in the night silently.

It was a lot of space under thick branches of the grand platan but animals pressing each other of a fear gathered to dense heap. Djigits counted sheep by one with difficulty in darkness - they were sixty-two. Bushbegi gave order each djigit to take ten sheep, and others are to be given to Abbos and his young brothers.

At once djigits with great ardor began to fulfill Temur's order.

- You, the fisherman with brothers should go to Samarkand's market before the loss will be disclosed. You are good experts yourselves to know where to hide rams, - Temur finished. - Here you know each reeds secluded corner and meat is very costly now, as well.

Abbos embraced Temur.

- Thank you, my named brother, thanks for everything. Don't worry about us: we'll "disappear" in our copses now.

When Temur jumped up the horse, Abbos ran up to Bekk resolutely and spoke to him excitedly:

- Please, Temur, allow me and my brothers follow you. We want to be a part of your army. - We'll serve you with our devotion and honor.

Temur approvingly looked at the tall youth, glanced at his brothers also the strong ones and thought: they would turn to be good soldiers after some years. Bekk announced resolutely screwing up his eyes.

- Abbos, as you like it. I'll be waiting for you and brothers in the Hojailgar village at any time, and the door is always open for you. You will stay at our place, and when it'll be the time - in his voice the sound of steel was heard. You will kill Olohuiddin and equalize his house with the ground. God is in our side.

Temur jumped up his horse not touching almost the stirrup and disappeared in the darkness. The whole suite rushed after him.

The rays of early summer sun woke up birds in the garden, and with their chirrup they formed a marketplace, and woke up djigits who were sleeping on a wooden bedstead among the scents of ripened fruits.

Abbos and his brothers who have recently came and settled in one of the vacant rooms of Taragay's house managed to accommodate at a new place at his farmstead. The elder Abbos accompanied Temur in all of his military games and encroaching. Being tall and with athletic body Abboskhon became the bodyguard of the young Bekk, and he was the shadow of him. Silent Abboskhoja began to secure and accompany his boshbegi's father - Amir Taragay everywhere. Little Abboskhoja was engaged in storage of fuel for a winter season. The snotty Abboskul looked after the cattle.

Abbos-fisherman got up earlier than his friends and having heard thud sounds on the backside of garden he smiled: how could Temur get up so early than others? Khudaidad was lying nearby, stretched and shrinking of the fresh morning wind, mumbled:

- You disturb my sleep, you can't keep pace with our boshbegi, and he trains each hit hundred times.

Meanwhile, young Bekk on the horseback was practicing in darts. Having finished this work he began another one - having beaten the horse with spurs he shoot the target with a bow on the whole speed. Having noticed the approaching navkars he jumped off his horse and gave reins to Gafari, cried out loudly:

- Hold yourself - and he jumped on Khudaidad. Having thrown him down on the ground, he stood in the defensive pose, and nodding his head he shouted out: - I'm waiting for frightened eagles, - and the band of ruffled young eagles rushed to the kurash-fighting with their leader.

At breakfast young djigits were eating kulchatoy - noodle soup with meat with great appetite, and after drinking strong tea after such mealy food they got instructions from Temur and went away.

Only Khudaidad couldn't go: He looked hesitatingly at the young master - weather to speak to him or not and should he bother boshbegi because of trifles. Amir himself clarified thoughts of suffered djigit. Watching inquisitively at his assistant, he asked:

- Any last news, djigit?

Khudaidad told about the old-viticulture, who was looking for a job.

- Whom are you talking about? - Temur asked again.

The assistant whispered swiftly:

- Here is one old gardener, very astonishing peasant, I was exhausted by his talk about vine.

- Well, I'll speak with him, any other news? - asked impatient young Amir.

The big-head Khudaidad rubbed the bridge of his nose and at last said:

- It seems that Nuriddin-aga will soon pass away - God will take him. He is now in low mood and very depressed.

- What's happened with him? - Bekk interrupted young soldier very fast.

Hesitating for a while Khudaidad answered:

- The honoured master, your father was indebted to the loaner Habiballah and to cover that debt he decided to sell his servant Rofiya. And Nuriddin was in love with her, the date of wedding was even settled, they waited only for the permission of their owners. And the result was tragic - he finished gloomily.

Temur couldn't find the words - he just put his turban straight and walking for a while he set on the bench and fell to thinking. Knowing the master's habit to dive into thought Khudaidad didn't disturb him. Having broken off the apple's branch he bit it. "Abbos is very adroit - he settled all his young brothers very luckily" - Khudaidad thought. I should also like to introduce my younger brother Berdibek to Temur for any job."

Khudaidad's thoughts were disturbed by boshbegi, inviting by gesture to sit down the bench near to him. Sitting nearby he requested whether he knew Hoja Hasan Diva's house.

- It was great happiness for his son Golib to study with me. - Bekk grinned.

- Yes, yes Bekk you seemed to have "ties of friendship" with him, - his assistant also grinned and smiled. - I listen to you very attentively...

Wolfhound Djulbars ran up to them - it had a privilege to walk all day and night everywhere in the garden. Dog could let a stranger enter the garden, but then he could never go out. Wolfhound stuck its muzzle into Temur's knee, Bekk scratched lightly behind its ear. But that miserly care was enough to make devoted Djulbars rush to the edge of the garden with a mad barking, it felt something suspicious in the rustle of withered leaf. Temur watched the dog with a kind look and looked carefully at his friend.

- Revenge must be wise, - and young Bekk squeezed his lips.

He didn't tell his true friend even that old story. Once father of Taragay (Temur's grandfather) had big herds. But while selling the sheep to Hasan-merchant it happened that the big herds were stolen and the buyer disappeared suddenly without paying. However, some time later the marked sheep were noticed by the devoted shepherds in the cattle-shad of Hoja Hasan Dev. Disgraced Amir Taragay could not be against the powerful head vazir of Kesh and even more - to prove stealing and robbery. All that secret talk was heard by chance by Temur during conversation of his father with Shamsiddin Kulol. Since that time young Bekk decided to pay Hoja Hasan Div back in his own way.

In two weeks Temur had found Nuriddin in the stock yard, he was building from pakhsa a new stable with three slaves. What a poor look a devoted slave had: a kerchief used to be white was on his head, it darkened his sunburn face, and trousers got dirty with clay were turned up to the knee. His feet grinded clay rhythmically, and his eyes were looking at nowhere. Temur called the slave, he ducked to the owner. The man stopped in front of him and looked at young Amir indifferently. His look seemed to say the words: "what else do you want of me?". Temur took tight-filled purse out.

- Look here, Nuriddin, it is the ransom for your bride. Give money to Amir, tomorrow the day of payment to moneylender is off. If he ask where the money from, you should say that you sell hereditary ring of your mother.

The slave looked at Bekk dully.

- Aren't you deaf? - Temur cried angrily. - Or you still are feeling offended for nuts? - He turned back discontentedly to go away.

Nuriddin came to sense. He threw himself to Temur's feet, grasped his right foot and burst into tears. Smearing tears on dirty cheeks he keened:

- My master, I'm your slave till the end of my life, till my last breath. Allah sees if I betray you - I will burn in the hell. Let me sacrifice myself for you, my young Bekk.

Bekk helped the slave get up, but Nuriddin fell down the feet of Amir again, Temur stopped him and said:

- I needn't your life; I need your good deeds. Take ten people as workmen and builders. The task is to strengthen walls, to build one castle more. But the main important thing is to guard estate well, not to let a hair fell of the heads of my relatives.

Nuriddin got up and swore:

- Allah witnessed, everything will be built, and do all my best to perform your wish. A man put his hands on the breast, bowed and with lightened face went back to the construction site. Without a fury - just for order he cried at the workers: - Why are you standing, asses, get down to work!

Son requested Amir to talk with a man whom he wanted to take as a gardener. Hakkul and Jamankul came up. Taragay drunk a cup of kumis and cleaned white drops from lips, said merrily:

- Well, show your worker.

The incomer was old but sinewy and strong, thin like pulled out moustache made his burnt face handsome. A cap made of the goat's wool was on the baldhead, right on the ear. Chekmen made of a dark-gray cloth was belted tightly. Jackboots which became black out of long wear were on his feet.

Taragay looked at his son surprisingly, - as if inquiring where he got that man from, - but Temur smiled only. Hakkul snorted contemptuously but the gardener didn't hesitate, he was waiting calmly when the word was given to him. Silence set in, everybody exchanged glances unintentionally. At last Taragay burst out laughing:

- Temurjon! Your vine-grower is dump in addition?!

Young Bekk answered quietly:

- If he begins his talks, you can not stop him. Chaman-aga, - Bekk turned to the gardener, - don't be shy, tell us about yourself and your work. You should know a lot about grape vine. - Temur softly insisted on the old man talk..

A peasant bowed, put his goat cap off, crumpled it in his right hand and began his speech in calm, penetrating voice:

- I'm from Gijduvon, it is a village on Miankala, to the east of Danja-Loish. All my kin was occupied with vine-growing; we knew the secret of keeping grapes till the end of late spring. The berries are dried out and we made black and white raisins. The secrets of different kinds of vine and making different candies were known.

- By what reason you are here? - Jumankul interfered to their conversation. The lips of newcomer trembled unwittingly:

- It was plague, - he exclaimed and as if being frightened of God, passed his hands over his face. - An awful disease mowed down many villages and emptied cities. Only me was alive in my village, I survived by a miracle, had wandered round the world. My sister lives here, married to Hafiz.

Everybody was shrinking involuntarily, recollecting those awful years when the whole life stopped, no holiday was organized, trade was stagnating, and all people were at home keeping doors closed being afraid to go out. Passers-by were not allowed not only to come to the houses but also to the villages they passed by. That time Taragay was afraid for the life of his newborn son. Fortunately, an awful disease went aside his house, but the black wings of plague touched other regions of Mongolistan and Turan.

Hakkul felt the mood of his master and asked quickly:

- Gardener, people say that you know everything about any vine!

Chaman-aga changed at once, his face became brightened up, and he began telling willingly:

- Yes, you are right. There are different varieties of grapes, and each of them has it's own features. For example, "Shuvargani" is rather strong one and very fertile. Its leaves are big, five-furcated with deep upper grooves; the edges of the leaf are big-teethed. Its berries are small, oval and black as covered by gray dust. The cover is thin; juice is light rosy and sweet. This

variety blossoms during the second week of May, ripens in August, a ripen berry couldn't stay fresh long as it is faded. "Shuvargani" is good for the red wine; the best sort of raisins - black raisin is made of it.

- Can you be shorter, aka? - Jamankul interrupted the speech of an old man.

- Of course, - answered Chaman quickly, - "Doroi" is one of the best varieties, it is a real adornment of a table. "Surkhak" has red berries, and it has other names too: "Karishmi", "Qora". In the East "Tana safedak", "Bakhtiyori", "Qora Husayni" varieties are known, too. Delicious wine could be made of these varieties of grape. Sweet raisin is made of "Charos". "Sohibi", "Maski" are varieties from Karshi region. "Vasarga", "Oq toyfi" can be kept for a long time. "Husaini lunda" is not spoiled during whole winter; it is also called as "Husaini-anguri-Kalon". "Chashmi gusala" is used for preparing red wine...

- My dear, - Taragay interrupted, - your knowledge of grapes is really great. Tell me about history of vine and its diseases.

- Samarkand land - Chaman was going on - is motherland of vine; it was planted as back as since the dawn of humanity. Vine grew on the hills of Turkistan and Zarafshon ranges, on Shahrisabz, Gissar and Malguzar mountains, too. Divine vine preferred to grow on the southern mountain slopes, huddling near the rivers and springs. When Iskandar- Alexander the Great - made his famous trip to Central Asia, his troops, crossing the Jayhun river on leather wineskins they put the vine cross-bars inside to make them stable. - Looking around the gardener saw that all were listening to him attentively, he continued: - These bunches of grapes suffer from severe changes of temperature, cold winds and rains in the period of blossoming. Sometimes grapes are almost frozen from sharp cold, and new plantings are needed. Rain is harmful for ripening berry which is cracked and rotted because of abundant moisture. Of all insects grape mite is the most harmful for vine...

- Enough, enough, - the master interrupted. - If your words accord with your acts, then you are an excellent gardener. Do go and work.

Temur stopped the gardener, smiling darkly.

- But I'm eager to know, father, what can we do with our vineyard?

- I can tell about it, too, - Chaman-aga nodded, - we had inspected your vineyard with the young Bekk already. I think that the crop harvested from a plantation can make up ten sacks of black raisin.

- Oh! - Taragay, exclaimed happily.

Gardener continued, - And it is without including the grapes for the delicious adornment of table and products made of grapes and kept for winter time.

- What do you need for this? - Amir asked getting seriously at once.

- Generally, there are three ways of making raisin, - the inspired Chaman began, - the effect of shade, or boiling water, or sun is necessary. I saw unoccupied plots on the roofs of houses in your surroundings...-the gardener looked at Temur, and the latter winked at him encouraging to tell everything to his father. Chaman touched his thin moustache and went on: -We need wheat or barley straw to make plaster solution for making a place for bunches of grapes even. Berries are put in one layer. When a bunch, under the rays of sun, gets dried well enough then its back side is turned. The period of drying is fifteen days. And raisin is ready. There is another way, - gardener stroked his thin hair on the head, - it is as follows: bunches of grapes are put into the baskets and put into the caldron with boiling solution of lime. Berry is kept in the boiling water till its skin gets cracked and wrinkled. Then the basket is taken out from the caldron, and bunches are put on the rush mats and dried under the sun for seven-eight days. It is enough for berry to be withered. The sorts of "Maski", "Vaskarga", "Suntaki" are used for this. The small-berry varieties are worth for drying in the shade.

Taragay raised his hands, stopped Chaman and finished satisfactorily:

- Well, old chap, these ways are enough. As I understood two caldrons and baskets are needed? And the straw is in the backyard. I give you two helpers, is it enough for the beginning?

Gardener nodded merrily:

- Amir, I have seen unoccupied plot where I try to grow the best grape varieties.

Temur, seeing the gardener off, wished him good luck and he went to Sayfiddin who was hurrying with something on his hand. Friends embraced and hissed each other. Temur looked at his friend from head to foot. On the head he had a turban, tied in a simple manner - one end of it hanged on the left shoulder; his crimson trousers were tucked into fir boot "arabi". A splendid sabre was on the left side. He was a black-brow handsome guy, and all his appearance emanated joy and real cordiality.

- You look like Amir of the big state, - Temur joked.

- Well, Bekk, your wishes for my luck are already half done. If God also takes part in it - then everything is possible in the world, - Sayfiddin answered seriously.

Suddenly the cry of Khudaidad was heard, who was running to them and said:

- We are in trouble, my Bekk! Our watcher came up, from the far watch-tower, and informed that big troops of Koshgar are approaching Hojailgar. Rabble of people, got armed haphazard, plundering every village and settlement on their way and killing people.

When that awful news were said to Taragay, he didn't believe first, but then the watchman ordered to be ready for attack - Temur with his young hot temper requested father to listen to him. Taragay wanted to reject him but remembered his son's first fight, which was made by Temur against robbers, stopped himself as the warriors' fighting was perfect. And what the young warrior was thinking about that time? Taragay asked with interest:

- Sonny, what do you want to do now?

Temur began talking with inspiration:

- Father, after having reached villages, the robbers could be divided into groups to enter the village from different sides. In this case the fight of our group could fail. But we can meet our enemies not in the village, but close to it. And now, as we have enough time, we should take out women and children to our estate, it is strengthened as a citadel. Let them take the very valuable things only, our people be safe in that place. Men will help Hakkul-aka and his warriors to repulse attack of the enemy. In front of our house

an old forge is. You, father should take a shelter with the main troops there, so that jackals would be between two fires.

- And what should I do? - Jamankul asked.

- You, aka, should stay on the top of the houses together with your people; it is a suitable place to shoot an arrow at the enemy. - Temur became silent and got merry of the idea he just had:- The best shots will sit on the top of the high trees as they are difficult to reach and can shoot aimed. - Then, looking at Sayfiddin, boshbegi finished: - We, together with our fighters, enter the village on the shoulders of these kashgars.

Hakkul smacked his lips with admire:

- It is the best trap, what was ever made. And casting his eyes down he added: - It is my training.

Jamankul, having smiled at the armour-bearer's words, said to Temur:

- There are arrows, but few bows.

Standing not far off Chaman, having heard these words, ran up quickly to help and blurted out:

- I can make self-made shooting bows.

Hakkul has smirked and not restraining himself, spoke sarcastically:

- Oh, it turned out that the wine-maker is able to do something, and I thought that the he can only tell long stories about the vine.

Taragay has approved Temur's plan and ordered the servants Abdullah and Mobashar to organize accomodation ones of inhabitants of Khojailgar in the farmstead at once, and the rest were at the young Bekk's disposal. Soon the peasants running from fields began to arrive. "Locust is coming!" - cried they in fear, but having seen the peaceful faces of the navkars and djigits of Temur, quickly took the prepared weapons and started to get ready for the battle.

As soon as robbers entered the village, Taragay gave a sign to start an attack. And there was a bloody battle. Temur's cavalry whooping burst into the village, the djigits chopped steppe jackals bitterly. And in a horror the ill-assorted crowd rushed to the house gates, but having been met with an arrow hail, recoiled to a forge where Taragay's detachment was waiting for the robbers. And in addition, the archers blew arrows accurately from the

roofs. And the jackal rabble scattered in all directions in fear, looking for escape. But only few could escape.

The captivated steppe jackals were sold on a slave market in Samarkand for a good price, and by Temur's suggestion the money was used to surround the village with a high adobe wall with sturdy gates, so that armed strangers could not take sleeping villagers unawares. And on the tops of trees, one farsah far from the village, the scouts began to perform their service properly, peering at the distant spots being on the alert - was there any danger for the peaceful villagers from the steppe side.

With beginning of spring blood boils up in veins of the young djigits. Spring is known as a season for competitions, rivalry. Music, dances, songs can be heard in houses and streets. Bright attires gladdened the eyes with diverse colors as if from the spring sun.

Girls and women in bright national dresses cook the most delicious dishes, decorate dasturkhons, serve the guests. The air is filled with a fine smell of freshness - the early tulips, timid snowdrops, flowers of the bitter almond; tender violets make this unique fragrance.

The family of Taragay was getting ready for the holiday. From his father Temur got an expensive military garb and fur cap made of small pieces of black astrakhan and a dagger made of damask steel. Putting new clothes on, Temur uttered: "God be praised for giving me this clothing and food". And the sisters of Temur, Kutlug Turgon-aga and Shirin Bek-aga got silky clothes of the tulip colour. In a yard, having put a big cauldron, women and girls with songs and dances, were cooking sumalak* of sprouts of wheat grain for more than twenty four hours. On the cauldron bottom they put a layer of cleanly washed small stones to avoid the overburning of candy. But children were explained that the stones were not just stones but cherished ones - who gets one in a bowl with sumalak will have a luck all year long. And girls and women do believe that if they do not move away from the big cauldron while cooking of sumalak then they can whitewash all the bad intentions and sins, and the most important was that all their dreams come true.

When Temur came to the women up, a new female-slave Sufiya, bought by Taragay in the Samarkand market for the mistress, passed him by dancing. Dark-complexioned, strongly built, with appealing hips, she suddenly stopped, bowed to Temur and, having put her left hand to the chest, sang tenderly: "Please, please, do have fun with us". Snapping her fingers, she was coiling as a grape vine. Temur has only smiled at this beginning feast and went on his way - having saddled the horse Bekk went galloping to the green city - Shahrisabz.

The city welcomed Temur and his djigits with sounds of karnays*, sur-nays* and drum rolls, invitingly calling for holiday shows.

On noisy streets one could see noble grandees and sheikhs, mullahs and judges, dervishes and kalandars, commanders, and navkars of different kind, servants, tillers, hunters and craftsmen. After leaving their horses in a caravanserai Temur, Abbos, Jaguy Barloss, Khudaidad and Suleyman bought sweets first. Suddenly they met Sayfiddin, he was also with his djigits. Temur, having hugged his friend, invited him to have fun together. Sayfiddin joyfully nodded, and they went to the central square, where the sounds of merry music were heard.

Near the square young ladies sold different kinds of flat bread: obi-non* - made of leavened dough, lochira - a big flat, unleavened kind of flat bread, chap-chap - a thin flat bread made of unleavened dough, piyozli-non - a flat bread with onion inside, sulton-non - king's flat bread, shirin-non - a sweet kind of flat bread. And right there men were cooking large pieces of meat in cauldrons, soup, pilaf. The small shops were full of sweets - there were fruit candies and honey candies, almond in sugar, many kinds of halva*: takhin sunflower, sesame, honey with nuts. Children were gathering mainly near those rows.

On a big square the gaiety was in full swing: rope-walkers were showing their skills. A young man with thin mustache, in a white shirt and blue baggy trousers drummed from time to time, and then anxiously looked up where a small boy with a long stick in his hands ran along the rope tightened between two stands. The boy-virtuoso delighted everyone with his fearlessness and adroitness.

- Keen feeling, - noticed Sayfiddin to Temur.

And Temur, as a sign of agreement, raised his right thumb. After the exciting show the djigits went to see Indian fakirs with snakes, laughed at a trained bear, were amazed by dances on stilts, guffawed to tears listening to askiya - a competition of the witty remarks.

Having been tired a little, Temur and his peers sat down right on the green grass, gobbling hot somsa* and drinking spring water. They were watching the dancing people with an interest. There a company from Samarkand was performing: besides comic actors there were also musicians who had black silky headscarves on. The dancers had bright colored robes, dark red shirts; trousers decorated with pattern, boots of red leather and white belts. The dancing women had dark-red silky dresses and baggy trousers of blue silk on. "The dance of rotation" by djigits and girls from Samarkand was performed quickly, and the impression was as if the free wind flew from wild steppes. Then a big ball was rolled out on a make-shift stage, Guli - "the girl with black eyes" flew up on it like a butterfly. Quickly moving graceful little legs, she sang in time with music:

Oh, dancer, dancer!

The heart beats in time with string, hands obey to the drum sounds!

The stroke of drum - and both hands are up!

The dancing girl is like whirlwind!

She is rolling, spinning tirelessly

Thousand circles, dozen of rollings - the dance never ends

She can not be compared with anybody else...

Young djigits did enjoy her light dance and simple singing, and they shouted approvingly. Having jumped off the ball, the dancer vanished among beautifully-decorated carts.

Sayfiddin's eyes shined with delight.

- Bekk! - the young man cried out in delight. - That Guli has just won my heart, and everybody called her a princess of this festival.

Poetic and refined dances have finished and there came a turn for expressive ones. "Jumping dance" was performed by boys from Tashkent; they wore the blouses of Iranian style with tight sleeves and tall pointed hats, embroidered with glittering beads. They were belt by long sashes the ends of which were freely blowing when the dancers pressed themselves close to the ground, whirled and jumped with the quick accompaniment of instruments. They were imperceptibly followed by two young ladies, appeared from artificial petals of lotuses. They had gauze robes on, decorated with many-colored embroidery, silver belts, and brocade shoes. The dance under the drum sounds was exotic. The girls were making eyes to spectators, and finishing the performance, lowered shirts to make their shoulders naked. They disappeared as quickly as appeared. With suppressed breath the spectators were watching Guli who was dancing on a stretched rope now. Guli was holding a Chinese fan in hands, her gauze flimsy dress was blowing - it seemed that the dancer was soaring in air.

When Guli sat on the rope, slightly brandishing the fan, all the spectators became still and the airy peri sang swinging:

*The bench is covered for the guests
The brocade carpet is unfold
The drum calls the spectators with fast beats
It hurries again and again
The peach leaf is swinging
In obscure light:
This is the singer from Chach,
Her lilac robe is swift
The patterned pendants are hanging down
The belt on her waist is like a flower
And when her song ended -
Nobody could help dancing.*

An illusion of a wonderful dream appeared when a small white cloud was soaring, and it seemed like a silver rain could sprinkle out of it any time.

When this heavenly vision was over a thunder of approving cries met the young dancer. And she, dropping her eyes began to walk round the public with a copper tray in her hands, and the contented spectators threw coins on the tray generously. The young fairy approached the djigits, and Bekk, smiling, threw a tightly stuffed purse on the tray.

- I am Temur, and you have admired us, - he exclaimed sincerely.

- Thank you young warrior, for the royal gift, - answered the girl and bowed down.

The djigits went aside politely, taking the curious ones away with themselves.

- For such a miracle, - Temur pointed at the rope, - the fairy of the blue sky, I owe you golden earrings, - and added: Where are you coming from and heading for?

When answering the girl lowered her head coquettishly, her voice was soft:

- I live with my brother, a fakir* beginner Maraud Kohajoni in Samarkand in Farunduz mahalla. - Some coins fell out of the tray, and Bekk picked them up quickly and gave the coins to the girl, holding her hands in his. The girl didn't take her hands away, but only nodded as a sign of her gratitude for the given money. - We are roaming with a cast from Tashkent. Though the earnings are low, but it is safer as there are lots of robbers on the roads now. We had been to India, and after Shahrissabz we are going to Baghdad. - The dancer finally, freed her tender fingers out of Bekk's hands which became rough from training, and said sadly: - Good bye, digit, it's time to go for me, and you owe me golden earrings with, - ruby and disappeared in a noisy crowd.

Sayfiddin and Jaguy Barloss came running and blurted out:

- Boshbegi, the wrestling is beginning, be quick or we can be late for its start.

They got there in time. Two fighters were just getting ready for the fight, they both had home-made shirts, knee-length breeches and leather galoshes on.

One of the fighters - as big as a mountain, dark, hairy, - it was unknown from what part of the world the bad luck brought him there, - stood still,

listening to the advices of his mentor, and only whites of his eyes flashed glaringly.

Temur with his gang found themselves next to the second fighter who was a Russian man. He was slender, supple, and another Russian was helping him, an aged with a splendid red beard and black eyes. Massaging his fellow-tribesman, he uttered sullenly:

- Well, Vanya, the rotten thing is coming out, - this time it is a strong bull, he'll scold you...

- Stepanich, do not be disappointed, - the young fighter answered joyfully and having met Temur's look, winked at his fervently, his eyes were shining as if asking: "Am I right?"

And the young Bekk decided to support this strong cheerful young man.

A big-nosed Nadjar stood beside the fighters, he was the master of the slaves and wanted to tell them something, but couldn't - an important grandee came up quickly to him and began to whisper something in his ear.

- Did you understand? - The grandee cried out threateningly and, having turned abruptly, went towards the crowd.

- Hey, slave, - and the big-nosed Nadjar, in his turn, began to whisper something in Vanya's ear, gesticulating abruptly while whispering.

The Russian's mentor, having heard the last words of the master, assented joyfully:

- Look here, Vanya, he is offering a business. Fight a little for the public and let him throw you - he's offering good money.

- Eh, Stepanich... - the grieve fighter said and went into a circle.

The slaves worked their bread off. They fought furiously. Rain began to drop, and everything was messed up - sweat, mud and blood. The hairy one managed to throw the younger one down and holding head and leg of his rivals, he began to bend him.

- Hold on, Russ! - Temur cried, and his djigits repeated after him:

- Hold on, Russ!

- Hold on, Russian! - Many voices cried from the crowd.

Vanya managed to free, stood up but soon began to limp and "Black mountain" (as people in the crowd called the "bull") grasped his belt, lifted

him and thrown down on earth. Sound of crunch was heard. The light-hair fighter moved away quickly not to be under the strong man. And he stood up again ready to fight. A big-nosed almost stepped on the circle where the fight was and whispered to the ear of Russian when he was near:

- Vanka, if you loose - then you and Stepashka will be free...

- Lie down dear Vanya, what is worth to you! - Bearded Russian was not even ashamed of the spectators. The freedom is costly than the honour.

And Nadjar repeated loudly the words of his tutor openly:

- Damn with you, I'll give you horses and accompany you to the boundary. You know my word. Will you lie down, Russ?"

Vanya turned out his broken head and spited blood.

- Fuck you! And for a moment he straightened, looked at the weeping sky and breathed out: - Oh, where is my strong honey drink - medovukha!
- And having seen Temur he nodded him as if he was an old friend.

He turned and went towards to the approaching rock-like wrestler. Shower became stronger. Like two bulls they bumped with each other and fell down on the ground. And "Black Mountain" with all his mass lifted up the flexible youth's body.

- Hold on, Russ!" - all the spectators cried being fans of indomitable Urus*

- Get up Vanya, get up! - His mentor Stepanich cried suddenly.

And at last Vanya managed to glide out of "Black mountain"'s body. It was apparently due to the God's help. The spectators supported him and he contrived somehow and embraced the immense waist of athlete, and then at sudden he threw him up and to the side - the giant couldn't keep his balance and crashed down. Vanya tried with all his might to keep his balance and he could do that. The black palvan* made effort to stand up but crashed down the ooze mud - he was too massive and clumsy that the strong strike on the ground had taken his might away. The spectators shouted with delight. The Russian made several steps and fell down near his countryman, a stream of blood flowed out of his mouth. Stepanich* couldn't catch up his friend and put Vanya's light-hair head very carefully on his knces and murmured quietly:

- Vanjusha, dear, don't care about this money. The freedom was near of course... Indeed, I'm an old dog, who couldn't realize anything. Our motherland Russia is more important than our freedom.

The rain had stopped and djigits rushed to the tealhouse. On the chor-pochas,* four soldiers played dice for money excitedly in one corner, in the other - two merchants with thick beards competed in chess. They ordered shish-kabob. Wet and chilled Temur with his djigits drank warm wine brought by Hasan one of Sayfiddin's companion with pleasure. Pouring bracing drink, Hasan began to praise the ruler of Nasaf who organized feast-day devoted to Navruz.

- Wait, - Sayfiddin interrupted him. - Was it worse here in Shahrisabz? I haven't seen such wrestling for a long time.

- This Russian is very strange, Suleyman interefered to the talking, - he rejected from money and freedom. Everything could be all right, if he gave himself up.

Temur, taking delicious piece of the fried young sheep meat, stopped them.

- Oh, my friends, it is not as easy as you think. Do you remember that high-rank grandee who came up to the owner of the slaves? He was Abuka-Kauchin, the representative of Mongol Stan, the kin of Genghis khan. He was sure of his victory, but anyhow, to be on the safe side, he ordered a long-nosed Nadjar to make that Russian failure. The meaning of this was that a black force of Horde is always a threat for everybody swearing everything on its way. But Ivan turned out to be not so foolish; he understood everything and did not part with freedom! He might sacrifice his life even not to disgrace his motherland, and proved the rebelliousness of Russia. But his native country will never know about that fight, it seems just to be an ordinary fight, and a crowd saw that unbending spirit of Russian. So, Russia is powerful with such warriors. The owner will kill Ivan anyhow. Well, my friends, it is getting dark, it seems we should go.

When they were on the road, there were fires of woods everywhere in the street, where teenagers were jumping through it. This meant the refining by fire out of all evils. Masked children in the caps organized round dances, sang songs and ran with flared splinters.

Sayfiddin came up to Temur to say goodbye.

- Boshbegi, on the days of Navruz you could be reconciled with the gang of Golib, they prepare something against you, I don't like it all.

Temur, embarrassing him, answered:

- I reconcile with anybody except Golib. I need that you, Sayfiddin, choose good warriors as many as possible, and let them start training with sabre and bow.

- All right, Bekk, everything will be done, - and young friend departed after swearing in faithfulness.

On the way home Temur was thinking about a brave Russian. What happened with that warrior later? He remembered lively and kind, at the same time, clear glance of Vanya, his smile, too. And the man with such smile could not be bad. But Temur wondered why that Russian smiled right at him. Unexpectedly for his followers Bekk turned his horse back. Warriors puzzled, looked at each other, hesitated for a minute or two, and followed their leader humbly.

Spring clouds were melting and swam away, and the moon was lightening the steppe evenly and brightly. Warm water was splashing still in the ravines and hollows. Awakened of winter sleep the buds were shooting their green leaves which were rustling calm and merry on the light winds. The smell of blossoming was spreading over the land. It made drunk and filled a young blood with a force of life. Spring inspired with obscure hopes which showed a way to Temur.

That time a creaking cart was running along the swampy road after the rain. Tired horses were pulling a broken cart hardly. Fettered Ivan-wrestler was lying on the matted straw, glancing aloofnessly to the round as pregnant moon, and thinking: "Thanks God, I'm alive and did not make anything against my conscience; otherwise hesitations would torment all the life long, the thought of the sin of treachery would crunch me. Now my spirit is calm, and thanks God! Besides, I feel that my liberty is near. A magic would happen after such a long time of ordeal and privation. And being free I can find my dear sister Elena soon..."

When the cart was shaking, the winner straightened his strong neck, and carefully touching his ill breast with injured fingers, the warrior coughed heavily and spat clots of blood. His feet were put in wooden stocks. Stepan frowned moodily, and looking at the fierce guards with hate said to his disciple:

- It's the end of us, Ivanushka, we will die in this foreign country, and nobody will know about us and where our destiny leads us.

- Don't croak, I'm sick without that, - the warrior exclaimed with his broken mouth.

- Well, how are you doing, Russians? - one of the guards asked.

- Well! And damn you, poor dog! - Red moustache man creaked with teeth.

- You, dead rat! - A guard fell into rage and beat Stepan on his back with a hard lash. - You will rot on the salt spears, I promise you exactly. The supervisor there is my relative and I will tell him what to do with you.

Suddenly a gap-toothed heard a familiar mortal whistle of the arrow and bent on the silky neck of horse quickly. He did it right in time as three of his wounded warriors with croaking and writhing were falling from the horses. The guard whipped the horses and rushed into darkness. Passing a grove he turned to the ravine, left his horse there and hiding behind bushes came back. Ivan with his elder friend did not expect such turn of their fate. A young man on a horseback was prancing in front of them. His friends with their guns ready were looking around. Looking carefully at a stranger the warrior remembered the young Bekk. It was he who supported him in the fight against "Black mountain". One of the brave warriors jumped off his horse quickly, took keys from the belt of the dead fighter and unfettered the slaves.

- Wait, wait, - Stepan croaked, has taken the iron and threw the pieces to the cart. - We shall make the best knives of them. We are smiths, - he added proudly.

Temur looked at both with interest and smiled suddenly. In the light of a fat-breast moon he saw thankful smiles of Slavs in response. Bekk looked

at Jaguy Barloss that rode up immediately to him and the bekk, with the sorry in his voice, said:

- Take these Russians to your relatives. Find the best sorcerers and let them treat a wrestler. Sell the horses of the dead guards and use the money for building a forge for them. When they come to sense, let them work with hammer - we shall need weapons.

Jaguy Barloss nodded and showing his concord said unsoundly:

- Temur, everything will be done as you said.

Bekk frowned discontentedly.

- Please, do not pronounce my name. Grass also has ears.

- You are right, - Jaguy Barlos whispered and dashed away to fulfill an order.

The cart with Russians moved further. The wrestler and Stepan were waving their hands for a long time. Ivan breathed in with a feeling of freedom and realized that he will stay alive out of any evil's spite. A pitted guard, falling down into the wet ravine, got out of it hardly, swore and crawled away. Suddenly the name of "Temur" was brought by the steppe wind. The guard stopped still but heard no other sound except the morning wind's whistle. "So, he was Temur!", - gap-toothed man remembered.

In the blossoming Kesh viloyat* there were sixteen regions. Huzar was an important one, as there were the fortified cities Subah, Havkad-Kuresh, Iskifagan; they were bound to supply forage, weapons, armour and warriors. Various handicrafts were developed in Kesh. Among them there were glazed pottery, brick burning, glass making, metal processing, weaving and sericulture. Shahrisabz was the exporter of sweet pomegranates, juicy apricots, juicy apples, amber peaches, honey melons, different sorts of nuts; big watermelons, grain, wheat, barley, millet, bean crops, cotton and iron are as well. Mercury was also the item of export; it was used for the gold extraction in the Nur-ota mines. Gypsum and alabaster were also quarried in Kesh region. A salt mine of Shahrisabz was also appreciated highly, the export of salt to Khuroson and its outsides was constant. Main grandee of Shahrisabz Hoja Hasan Dev went home, tired after the examining of goods being exported from Maverannahr. Vazir* of the city - Kesh Hoja Hasan Dev with

doubted in his gessings. - Who else then? Was it Temur, the son of Taragay?
- Vazir* asked himself mistrustfully.

Hearing a word "Temur" Avazmurod made a guilty smile and said softly:

- No, master, he is still milksop and running with wooden swords in the streets, but a prisoner was really killed.

Not hearing him, Hoja Hasan Dev glanced at a luxurious ceiling, stood for a minute and suddenly cried out:

- It was Temur! A young snake, clever, quick, brave, he quarreled with my son Golib, and that was his revenge. And he also took my sheep away - the host was stricken with a sudden guess. Or an old story with the merchant Gasan might come to his mind. And a dim remembrance splashed in the vazir's mind.

Burning with love to Shakhnoza, a jealous man blind with a hate to her husband had attacked the trade house of Gasan with his soldiers. He had stolen a herd of sheep, robbed the caravan which just arrived from Bada-khshon diamond mine. Later the chief grandee had found out that those sheep were Taragay's, and that the merchant didn't even paid yet. To avoid making the noise, vazir went then begging to the powerful Ubaidullo, taking those ruby stones for present. He told about his unhappy love and the rising conflicts with Amir Taragay frankly. Hazrat smiled kindly, blinded by the bright of precious stones. He himself together with his dervishes helped to sell that unlucky merchant to slavery far to the overseas countries. Spreaded rumors about alive Gasan and stolen herds are kept at Hoja Hasan Dev's house came to an end when the robbers who confessed in killing of the merchant Gasan were quartered. But, probably the true facts were known to Taragay's family, and Temur found out about it? The latter words were pronounced by vazir* loudly.

- Oh, no, - Avazmurod answered the exclamation of Hoja Hasan Dev sincerely. - Temur's head is full of infant pranks, a mind of mature man is needed for such thing.

- Oh, no! I heard about forecast of astrologers. And glory about his organizing skills is flying from one village to another. A little nestling grew up to an eagle, and he must be annihilated to avoid his turning to a strong

eagle. - Coming to the window the grandee said with worry: - Now we wait for the couriers from ruler of Nasaf and Hazrat Ubaidullo. Well, tomorrow you come to me together with that trouble-worrier, now widow Shakhnoza must come to me; - vazir had smoothed thoughtfully his beautiful moustache out. When an influential man of Kesh, whom a lot of things depended on, pronounced the name of the widow his face brightened, and he ashamed strangely, - thank you for your finding this golden-hair fair, she is my delight.

Avazmurod pretended to show servile attention and seeing that vazir couldn't help keeping in:

- All my hopes and wishes are in my only son Golib, but I don't feel the son's attitude to me. When I was ill and if he visited me - he did a favor. He had never said any warm, kind word not saying about trustful talking. His arrogance...- bitterness was heard in the words of vazir. Hoja Hasan kept silence and said to Avazmurod indifferently: - Well, see you tomorrow.

Just after Avazmurod's leaving a loud knock on gate was heard:

- By the name of Nasaf's ruler, open the door!

- Do call kadi*, rais* and kutval immediately and together come to Hoja Barloss and wait, - vazir said quietly.

Sending muhtasib*, a grandee fell into thoughts for a moment: Whom did they sent? They probably decided to seek in all directions, and it was clear that Hoja Barloss could not be in piece. What a bit bird that Bukhara man was and what was the reason on making such a noise? At any case, caution is needed.

Amir Vohid arrived with his daredevils, and the yard of dastur* filled up with the voices of crowded people and by knocks of hooves. Grandee studied at school with Vohid, they used to be friends one time, meet often after finishing school, drank wine. Now they seldom meet each other at the receptions of Nasaf ruler. Since some time Amir Vohid headed a punitive body called "Shihna", and that body had an unlimited power, interfered to any business which seemed to be dangerous for the ruler. Amir Vohid watched those who could direct the people against khan's power.

Old friends embarrassed. Vazir watched his friend; Amir put on embroidered expensive robe, the kavuk - tall head wear around which white turban was on his head, the orange-color trousers were put into a high bootelegs of black leather boots.

- You are a fop, indeed; you should serve harems of your enemies but not to be a spy..., - Dastur of Kesh said smiling sweetly.

- You are right, dear vazir", - the chief of "Shihna" answered, - you are so right, that you should prepare for my leaving a coppery haired girl up to your taste, and a young man with a doll face who opened the door - for my owner.

Vazir's heart shrunk - did they had known about his concubine? A wide jealous grasped Hasan Div when he imagined his Shahnoza in the arms of Amir. "No, - the host relaxed himself, - it was just a play on words".

- I'm in a hurry, - Amir Vohid interrupted his thoughts, - you shouldn't lay the table... After drinking a cup of sherbet", the Nasaf's envoy total the reason of his arrival. - Ali Bahodir happened to be caught as dervish; he was a member of Nakshbandi order and had rather important influence on Bukhara rulers. They wanted him to be a stool-pigeon and our saint Ubaidullo wished to get some secrets but the fish swam away. - Amir scratched the bridge of his nose. - Up to now it was not clear if he was killed or stolen. He was out, hell him but your honorable Shamsiddin Kulol pleaded for him, and our old Ubaidullo was furious because of this. This is an edict of the court investigation; - Amir Vohid took a sheet of paper out of the left sleeve of the robe and gave it to vazir.

Looking through the content of the edict attentively, Hoja Hasan Div asked astonished:

- This edict must be signed by the highest and most generous ruler, but..

The head of investigation department interrupted him quickly:

- You know, though you have eagle eyes, but everything is right. Though this is the signature of Ubaidullo - but everything was agreed with the ruler, it was done fast for saving a precious time. Well, what is your idea of it?

I send your decision right to the high divan*, and then - to our ruler - a wise and right-minded man...

After a short hesitation dastur said:

- Let regard it as robbery, and the death of the prisoner was the result of the robber's fret as they could not get anything from him. Otherwise, we will get into trouble. I, myself carry out a secret investigation, and if my suspicions come true, and if I found out that that was only a trick to make Ali Bahodir free, I will drown the clever organizer in the pool with your help. Let's stop it, - and embracing Amir, vazir said in a warm voice: - Let your army stay here, let them eat and drink with delight. My escort will see you off, Hoja Barloss is waiting for you with his people, and I make some orders and come, too.

Surprised at vazir's fast and firm decision, Amir Vohid did not know how to react and went out of the room.

Temur went to the bazaar with his warriors. The more he rode along that road - the more he admired at the new opening pictures. Endless expanse with a bitter sweet smelt of fresh air and magnificent white summits of the mountains in the far were admiring. In that high white storage the God got the unehsaustable water reserves for moistening the lands of Kashkadaryo and Movaraunnahr, turning them into a blossoming garden. From that curved mountain ridges the Jayhun, the Sayhun, the Zarafshon and the Kashkadaryo rivers take their origin, and their strong streams fall to the Khorazm Sea or are lost in the burnt sands. Emerald grass covers the endless space, the clover carpets please the eye and herbs are scenting. It is in spring. And in autumn white cotton balls open, wheat ripen in the fields, honey melons mature in the melon plantations. The rows of straight poplars, elms and bending weeping willows grow along the roads. When approaching the gardens the divine smells grasp a heart - soft peaches, velvet-like pears, juicy apples and ruby pomegranates cherish the eyes. Then you see walls of houses protecting a family life against curious glance. Covered from head to foot women are hurrying along the streets, the riders on horsebacks also dash about there, walking people are hurrying on their

business, and there one can see grandees, craftsmen, and peasants. Suddenly, a donkey stopped in the middle of the street not giving a way to passers-by, and only strong strikes of lash made it go further. The flock of goats and sheep is moving to the market to be sold. Golden tops of minarets are seen above the mess of bazaars. Bazaar in Kesh is famous with its unique character; variety of goods expresses the essence and spirit of the East.

Temur purchased necessary things in the market - he bought more than ten sacks of flour, rice, he bought horses and also weapon, then he began to select gifts for his family. For a long time he was in search and finally bought pompous Tabaristani turban for ten dinars for his father, he bought cut of famous Merv fabric "mulkhon" for his mother and silver rings for his sisters. Having loaded all packs to the covered carts a young Bekk went home.

Suddenly at the main gate of the market the carts of young Bekk were stopped by bearded and insolent guard. Having looked into the carts carefully and haven't find anything suspicious, lashkars apologized, and their chief - a young elegantly dressed djigit explained:

- Bekk, I beg your pardon generously for that inspection as we are looking for dangerous criminals - the ayars: one of them is from Samarkand, the second one is from Kesh - they are two leaders. Oh, it will be such a regret to miss them - a young fop added knittingly. - Our informer recognized them - such a chance to excel. If you meet them on the way, please, detain them. For the catching of these night thieves a big prize will be given.

Temur silently nodded and made a sign to his navkars letting them to move further. As soon as the carts was in the street one more horse division appeared in the distance. They were guards. A young Bekk looked around absently and suddenly his glance caught the hopeless glance of a young man who was standing with his elder fellow under the cover of the side-gate of a big house. Ayars held big knives in front of them; they decided to fight till the last breath. Young Amir, still looking at the night thieves, whispered only with lips to Jaguy Barloss:

- Draw off the guard.

Djigit quickly turned the horse and galloped back to noisy market. Ssarbars riding from the opposite side decided that somebody was running away, and with cheerful shouts rushed for pursuit. Temur rode near the guys and said silently:

- Jum to the carts quickly.

Ayars immediately jumped into carts. When it was quiet again and the carts stopped in the district of needle-maskers - By the order of Temur Khudoidod opened the curtain of the covered carts and shouted: "Go out". Young men jumped out of the carts to the ground.

The name of the elder man was Abu Said and that of quite young fellow was Zukheyr.

Jaguy Barloss came along galloping, quickly stopped the horse near carts and shouted cheerfully:

- They ran after me, taking for the night robber and nearly caught me.

Abu Said putting the knife into scabbard which hang on his girdle, applied to Temur:

- I am ayar from Samarkand. Here we were on business, but denounced. Thank you, honorable Bekk that you helped my fellow Djavonmard and we are your debtors, you saved our lives. Djavonmardi, - continued Abu Said, - keep to three principles: the first is - keep to your words. You're our friend, and we say so - it is real. The second one is - do not act against the truth. You Amir yourself are the truth as what you say or order is the real truth for us. The third clause of Djavonmardi's regulations is to be patient. We were patient and got the gift of destiny in your person.

Temur smiled lightly:

- Enough, djigits to sing the flattering words, we performed a duty of Moslem people.

However, Abu Said continued with sick obstinacy:

- I am the leader of djavonmardi, we have no program, but our codex of night noble thieves is - not to admit crimes of sleeping enemies and never kill the women. When you wish to see us - you can find one-legged Vali near the old mosque always - and just give him a sign...

Temur heard ayar's words patiently and then shouted to Suleyman to bring two chopons."

- You can't go far with your dress, - he explained.

Ayars put on chopons, thanked him one more time and disappeared in the dark. After the departure of night thieves, the djigits of boshbegi began to prepare for their way.

- They imagine themselves as noble people but they are straddles and thieves, really - Jaguy Barloss burnt off.

- Don't say so, - Jako interrupted him. - They are courageous, patient and always keep to their word. They rob only rich men and help their friends even in the prison.

Sayfiddin interfered in:

- Ayars are certainly the participants of every disorder in cities during revolts and absence of the ruler. In Syria, - Sayfiddin continued applying directly to Temur - the groups of young people played an important role, - those were the real ayars.

- How do you know about all this? - Jaguy Barloss asked distrustfully.

- The merchant arrived from Baghdad, and he was robbed by ayars - it was he who told about the night robbers. By the way, in Baghdad, in general, the inhabitants join a djavonmardi. They are craftsmen and the young people. First of all they are uniting in groups, finding their place in society, and only afterwards they begin their night robbery.

Suleyman who was sent to get water from a canal came back. After a moment he cried:

- I give water to the last horse.

Showing that he heard him Bekk slightly raised his hand and said thoughtfully:

- There are such brave men also in Sabzivor, Khuroson and Tuss. Such groups of ayars can be also found in Bukhara and in Samarkand, and in any riots and troubles the rulers always remember about this powerful force. Many of ayars, who earned a lot of money in the past, became great nobles. But... talks are talks, and we should not forget the deeds. - Temur came near to his horse, gently slapping the crupper and said not so loud: - Come clos-

er, djigits. Jaguy, Jako, go home with food and inform parents that I remain in the town on business. Sayfiddin and Suleyman, go to the mountain and hide the weapons. Khudaidad, you're to find our detachment and check everything what I ordered.

- Sounds of thudding of hoofs and grinding of carts of leaving djigits were heard. Temur, with his bodyguard and two young servants were on the road to Najar's house, in order to pay the debts of his father Taragay. In the evening they stopped at a tavern to eat, they also had some barley vodka. Temur didn't want to stay the night either in the yard or at his relatives. Twice it seemed to him that two strippers of young people watched them. But, maybe it seemed to him only because of drinking the vodka.

The night was dark, and cold wind quickly refreshed the riders. Reaching the district of merchants, Temur sharply stopped the horse. There were seen shades in front of them, and the detachment of armed riders went to maydon.* At a moment the riders began to close all ways for retreat skillfully. Very quickly Temur and his bodyguard and servants were encircled from all sides. The trap shut. "How it was silly to get into a trap so easy", thought Temur. And riders with their swords and sabres were approaching, and the feeling of approaching death was sensed in that ill-omened mass of people. The killers were everywhere along all streets and passages leading to the maydon. Lashkars prepared their long spears ready to kill. The chief warrior stepped out on his horse. Spitting and boasting of his armor he cried in humiliating way:

- Hey chicken, your time is over; take your death with dignity.

Sarboz* with cut ear, exclaimed gaily:

- Cut them, cut!

And howled angrily like a wolf, turning his head from one side to another.

Temur refreshed finally, he remained calm, but his eyes were full of hatred.

Turning to his servants, he said:

- If you'll die in the battle - then I thank you for faithfulness, - Temur ordered sighing hardly: - We'll pass the left side-street from the main street,

protect me from back, - and young Bekk rushed forward grabbing the sabre. But the forces were too unequal.

Two servants were killed at once with sabres cutting their bodies into pieces. Abboskhon was defending fiercely, but being wounded he also fell down from horse. But there were losses also among the enemies; Temur and Abboskhon killed about ten warriors.

The chief warrior howled with drunken voice:

- Take the little snake alive!

And ropes rounded the neck of young Bekk. Sarbozes, dropping the captive from the horse, pushed him into a big sack.

- Drop him to the havuz!" - the chief of the punitive force began to kick the sack with his legs.

- Take the Taragayan creature! - The warrior with cut ear began to help him. - Give him to me, Matnazar, I'll kill him.

- No, dear Abu Kosim. I received the order to drown him, - Matnazar answered with a wicked smile.

- Then, let's take a pleasure, - and they began to kick and bit a lifeless sack with spears.

With sated devil soles the goon killers took the sack from two sides and swinging it, threw to the pool.

Matnazar asked sarkastically with twinkling eyes:

- Abu Kasym, do you think that our actions agreed with the wish of vazir of Kesh Hoja Hasan Div. We have the same enemy, and dastur was the first to start revenge. We supported him and got the highest blessing for annihilation of the whole Taragay kin. - Hey, amir Taragay, you have many strong enemies. And the leader fell laughing throwing his strong head back. Suddenly Matnazar became silent, closed his eyes swinging in a saddle and said huskily: - It is worth to live for such happy moments. - And, bending to his companion-in-arms continued with a threat: - My strike is not stolen sheep of Hoja Hasan Div or even deliverance of dervish Ali. My revenge for the sabre hit of Taragay is a terrible death of his only heir.

Abu Kasym remembered that shameful battle when he lost some teeth. But the leader! He got a kick from behind as if he was running away escaping - and that kick was right to his ass.

- Be ware, Taragay, I will reach you, as well - Matnazar said hoarsely with hatred.

The detachment gathered around the pool waiting for the order of its leader to fill it with spears. But suddenly another order followed, and the strong and confident voice demanded:

- By the name of vazir of Kesh give us the way!

The closed and decorated with silk cart appeared with the accompanying riders in rich clothes.

Sarbabs were frozen with fear: they were astonished as the cart managed to reach them insensibly for the experienced lashkars. They were probably carried away and forgot to keep to caution. Bandits raised the spears and prepared to fight. The strong warrior in armour riding a bay horse was in front of the cart. He raised his hand imperiously and shouted rudely:

- Do perform the order of vazir of Kesh Hoja Hasan Div! By the name of vazir of Kesh free the captive!

The face of Matnazar was malicious.

- He is a host of the feast, - he whispered to his stooges. - Let's disappear without surplus troubles. And he whistled silently - the band escaped in a moment.

But Matnazar - that inveterate bandit was mistaken as that person was not a vazir of Kesh but mistress Shakhnoza - a widow of merchant Hasan who was killed somewhere abroad.

Young lady was moving back from her night meeting with vazir. When she heard a noise aside Shakhnoza-khanum looked out of the cart window covered with a silk curtain and asked:

- What happened there, Ostanqul?

The experienced warrior staring to the darkness at the pool answered:

The strangers thrown somebody to the havuz ... - he finished after hesitation, - to my mind, it was a body of a killed person. - He straightened in saddle, looked around a battle ground and said with anxiety: - My mistress, we should not stay here, it is very dangerous.

But a young lady uttered:

- Ostanqul, it seems your sabre became probably rusty! - And flashed with naughty smile.

The warrior who had many battle-scars became confused:

- Madame, your tongue is sharper than any sabre. But my fear is only for you. I promised my master to take care of you till the end of my life.

- Come on, come on, Ostanqul, - young lady whispered, - you remembered dead Hasan at the wrong time, - and if they killed an unguilty person?!

The old warrior bowed to his mistress pressing his hand to the chest.

Navkars of Shakhnoza-khonum dragged out the sack and and had taken a breathless body out of it.

Madame and Ostanqul exchanged their glances silently. An old warrior bended and snuggled his ear up to Temur's chest and boomed gladly:

- He is alive.

Shakhnoza, leaning against the arba, said quietly:

- One can see that the God wished us to that good deed. Ostanqul, send anybody to the doctor. - Her voice was resolute: - And I hope that your warriors can hold their tongues?

The bodyguard looked at her reproachfully. One of the guloms rushed for tabib and the rest servants put the bleeding Temur to the covered cart of Shakhnoza.

Shakhnoza looked around the battlefield and said thoughtfully:

- Yes, this warrior proved his courage! And now let the God help him to stay alive.

Shakhnoza helped servants to wash Temur from dirt and blood and put a silk dressing-gown of her husband on the youth. Tabib arrived soon and bandaged Bekk's head and lubricated his bruises and abrasions with ointments. Tabib - an old man thin as a rake shook his head and said:

- Well, djigit is in very bad condition, I don't know the state of his internal - they can be damaged. He doesn't react to anything. I hope that his young organism will survive. Give him this medicine constantly, I'll come in everyday.

In three days searching throughout the Kesh and alarming all services in the town, by chance Taragay have met the tabib who treated Temur, and

only then he came to the house of the deceased merchant Hasan. Rattling in high boots and frightening the servants the soldiers burst into the private residence of Shakhnoza-khonum. They wanted to take away almost lifeless Temur, but the widow did not allow them.

- Where have you been before, soldiers. - She cried angrily. And added in low voice: - You can take him if you manage to bring him alive.

This stopped djigits, and Taragay himself with broken heart waved his hand as deciding to leave his son there.

Two weeks more Temur was under the widow's guardianship. From time to time he came to his sense and lost it again because of burning fever. All the time Taragay was near his son, he turned gray-hair and emaciated.

Finally tabib let father take his son. Djigits had accompanied him on the way to Khojailgar with a great precaution. He was seriously ill for a long time. He was lying for hours, looking at the ceiling with a stubbornness, as though he burst out his anger at a beautiful design created by a skillful master. Taragay was suffering biting his moustache. He looked at Temur's friends reproachfully. They couldn't rescue the young master from the odd misfortune. The djigits gathered together in the garden, unsheathed their sabres and swore to avenge for their leader, for killed Abboskhon and two guloms, to take vengeance on any killer regardless if he was khan, vazir or a leader of the robbers.

They rummaged all dark places of Kesh, questioned all vagrants, thieves and robbers about the witnesses of that accident. But they couldn't find any information. Many times the former warrior - old Ostankul recollected the details of Temur's rescue but the faces of all attacking bastards were covered.

And Temur did not get up - he lied renounced, indifferent to anything. As before his eyes were staring at ceiling, and he did not want to speak to anyone.

The winter came. It was snowing and earth was white. The air was clean and fresh. The soldiers cleaned the path and tidied up with spade the snow-drifts from the roofs. And on the first winter day Temur came to his senses and told that he would like to be up and go out.

At the courtyard, the young Bekk made a white snow ball and said to his father:

- Let Allah clear my soul of filth!

- Yes, yes! - said father hearing the voice of his son. - Snow is cleanness and it's from Allah.

And the second wish woke up in young Bekk.

- I want to go to hammom*

And Taragay realized that his son was alive.

Taragay was proud of his hammom. Hammom was built by master Alimardi - a yellow faced, gloomy looking old man-as though he was sick but he knew his job in all details. The design of the hall and room for recreation made them cosy. The next was the room with the stove for washing feet, a small door led to a dome-shaped bathing room with two big vats - one with cold and another - with hot water. The vat got warm from the stove in the hall; it was coated with a river shingle. Wooden flooring led to the bathing vat. The bather threw cold water over the hot shingle; the vapour was produced and heating increased. On the right wall the master built shelves where the bather could just lie sweating or had a massage.

Bathing room was connected with a room with a swimming pool. Master Alimardi had been to Konstantinopol and Trapezund where he got knowledge of bath building from the local builders.

Alimardi used a special solution called "kir". The mixture was made of a bowl of ganch, bowl of slaked lime, and sand, ash and water were added. Alimardi put the vat with the solution on stove. From the morning till night one of the assistants was mixing the solution. With this solution the master plastered the stoves, pools, wetting the plastering with unboiled milk. Then he polished the surface with shingles.

Temur has refused the help of servant and wanted to wash himself, but when he went up on a shelf, has dropped a dipper from hands he regreted that did not take one of them to the bathroom: he was very weak and even was not able to get down - he has neither force, nor wish. The new servant Sufiya, strong, with nicely-shaped body and expressive eyes, has brought fresh linen for the young master. When she entered the bathing room, Temur

called her for help. Sufiya whispered happily: "Just a moment", and locked on the hook of the door fast. Then she has thrown off clothes, stretched her hands forward and went towards Temur. She started to massage master's head with strong but gentle hands, and then she has passed on shoulders, and mashed the muscles of his back for a long time. Temur did not react in any way, his body laid as a corp. And then Sufiya filled copper wash-basin with an icy water and poured on Temur. And he became alive. "Ah-ah!" - He yelled, but not from insult or fright. He remembered... Hauz,* cold water of a reservoir and a person with the face covered with beard and with crooked smile. How many times, gazing at ceiling, he tried to understand, to realize, and to recollect what has happened that night. And he could not - there was emptiness in his head. And finally it dawned upon him and he realized those events. And his soul became quiet.

- What they had left me alive for? - He said loudly.

Sufiya deftly has climbed up shelves and asked gently:

- What did my master say?

Temur took away sweated hair from his forehead and turned over on his back said:

- Now I shall revenge!

Chapter IX



TEMUR IS IN SAMARKAND

Heavily loaded carts passed the village Mukhtarin situated between Kesh and Samarkand. The group of riders headed by Temur accompanied the carts. Tegina-begim urged Taragay to send the son to Samarkand to the distant relatives and the same time Nuriddin could sell the goods on the bazaar - black raisins produced by Chaman-aga. Temur's friends Sayfid-din, Jaguy Barloss, Khudaidad, Suleyman and Nuriddin together with horse riders accompanied him. In few days more and small caravan achieved Afrosiyob.

Afrosiyob was terribly ruined in the time of Mongol's invasion during besieging of the city wall. The dead warriors were buried just between ruins, and their graves formed the cemetery. The city had moved to the south-west.

After leaving Afrosiyob - the gloomy shade of Samarka - the detachment rushed towards Samarkand. Having moved at a trot slowly through community Gatver, famous by planted cypresses, the detachment stopped at the street Khayan. There Oisha - a relative of Tegina-begim lived. Nurid-

din had parted, set off with horse riders - about ten stalwart guloms - to caravanserai. Early in the morning it was necessary to occupy place on the market place. The loaded cart was creaking mournfully along the sleeping streets.

Oisha-apa opened a wicket, she was a big woman with awkward face, the fuzz of grayish hair covered her head, and her bird-like eyes closed of joy immediately. The embraces and common questions began. Boshbegi ordered djigits to carry presents - sheep carcass, sack of rice, flour of sack, jug of oil, dry fruits into the house. Boshbegi presented length of material and kerchief to the hostess. Oisha-apa, having seen the length of material "bosma shol" got strunned. This fabric was distinguished for by its softness and amazing beauty, and was used for making the expensive robes. Oisha was affected deeply and had even shed few tears.

- Just think - I had never had such dresses being a daughter-in-law, and getting old I should be dressed nicely.

After night dinner the old aunt wanted to make a bed for the young Bekk in the sitting room separately, but boshbegi went to sleep together with his friends on ayvon.* Oisha-apa lost her husband long time ago, and soon she got into more terrible ordeals - her son and daughter-in-law died of an awful unknown illness. It is almost impossible to bare such sufferings but Oisha was growing up her grandchildren with patience.

Temur awoken with cock-crow in the early morning. Getting down ayvon, boshbegi looked around the yard. The tramped path separated the yard into two parts - on one side the fruit trees grew, on another - the kitchen garden was. At the end of the yard, among a hen harem, the fire-red cock was walking who awoke Temur so early. The voice of Oisha was heard from the women's half of house.

- Rikhsi, you should remember that your head is to be slightly thrown back and shoulders loosen and dropped...

- But I am tired, - capricious voice of a young girl said. - What do I need all these exercises for if you don't allow me to dance at holidays?

- Oh, my granddaughter, if any Amir sees you at the holiday, let the God avoid you from being stolen. But the girl should know how to dance.

When you marry... - she added in a proud voice: - and more of that you play instruments beautifully. You will not be ashamed being with in any society.

Boshbegi, waiting for Oisha-apa, took a stick and started to brandish it, training in cutting. The gentle melody and a young sweet voice singing a spring song were heard from the women's part of house.

- Listening to, my son? - Oisha-apa asked, approaching unnoticed.

- Yes, her singing is great; it touches my soul, - young Bekk answered.

- That was, how my future husband allured me by his music which drawn the anger of all relatives. It was only your mother who supported me; she didn't turn away from me, and for this I am very grateful to her.

The perky music was heard on the other part of the yard.

- This is my grandson, - the aunt said with pride. He and his friend Mavlon-zoda are there. They both want to enter madrasah in Samarkand city, and I appreciate their zeal to sciences. And they both like to play music instruments. Let's go, my son - Oisha-apa whispered mysteriously, - I would like to show you my husband's generation heritage, and she led boshbegi to naqqorakhona - a special place, where musicians play and musical instruments are kept.

The boys, who were playing dutars, jumped up at the appearing of Temur and grandmother. Mavlonberdi, being embarrassed, rushed to hug relative, uttering:

- Why didn't you awake me at night?

- Mavlon-zoda, a handsome boy, bowed modestly.

- Temur-aka, tomorrow is holiday "Mikrjon". - Boshbegi looked at him suprisingly and the boy began to tell about that holiday with pleasure. - It is all people competition in bow shooting. It is an unusual show. Each governor celebrates this holiday in his or her estates. Usually "Mikrjon" is celebrated on the first day of sixth moon, but some kings celebrate is in autumn, after collecting the harvest. The games are favored by people because at this very day the winner becomes "the governor of city Samarkand" for one or three days.

- And where does it take place? - The young Bekk asked with interest.

- These military celebrations usually take place on the bank of river Siab, to the east from Samarkand city in a vast hunting reservation, where the novice warriors practice hunting on the wild boar - the boy explained readily and added: On that day people put on new clothes, pray for forgiveness, give alms and go to celebrate with clear thoughts.

Having thanked the young lad warmly, boshbegi gathered his djigits after lunch, and till the evening, they were practicing bow shooting.

Ancient forefathers had chosen the place for military training not by chance. The green almost round valley was surrounded by the ripply terrace-shaped hills. The crystal ringing of the small waterfall was heard. The rising disk of shining sun behind the hills was stretching the tender rays towards the fresh verdure as if the carpet was spread around the valley. Unsaddled horses, shaking their heads and snorting with pleasure, were nibbling the soft field of grass.

Martins are rushing, sporting in the turquoise sky. The light winged swallows are weaving the invisible pattern of the lace by their forked tales. Suddenly the big flock of different pigeons: dove-coloured, white-breast, grayish-brown burst into the reek into the azure sky. The birds like friendly family are curling over the city. And from the round-dance the twiddle-player flies out. In the adroit flight it gets still suddenly, hangs for a moment in the empty sky and suddenly performs the miraculous turnover. The birds are rejoicing in their free flight.

By that time, all the preparations to the festive were completed. The natural trough - amphitheater was full of citizens and guests of the city.

The six targets were installed on the vast glade. On the left from the shields with targets the tablecloths covered by red fabric were laid. The prizes and three big bows made of horn of a mountain goat were put on them. The archers could hardly strain the bow, but the sent arrow could hit through the steel helmets and shields. The prizes were three astonishingly beautiful fine big vases made by the local masters.

The referees were sitting solemnly on the long benches. The city governor was absent; he got cold when hunting. The chief vazir* was instead of him, he looked evidently happy to rule the festival. Next to him,

the nobles of various ranks took place. The participants, after preliminary agreement, were divided into the groups by six. The archers stood opposite their targets on fifty steps distance. Among them, who craved for victory, the warriors were in new light armors as well as the sons of merchants, young craftsmen and members of religious groups. The chief noble of the city waved by the white kerchief and tauls - drums began to thunder; and beating the roll of a drum they stopped unexpectedly. Everything was still with expectation of the festival beginning.

And the competition has started. After each lucky shot the spectators whistled in support. But each mishit was accompanied by the breath of reproach of a thousand-voice crowd. If somebody missed the hit - he should give the place to another one. As a fact the half of the participants was out of competition very fast. Twelve horse-riders on service, two guloms for each shield replaced the former targets the size of which was as the size of kosa* (a big cup), for the new ones - as small as of piala* (tea cup). The nerves were strained. The unceasing buzz of spectators supported the mergens - known as the best archers. After the noon prayer, six archers were left for the final competition. Guloms stuck white sheets of paper to the wooden shields and hang golden coins on silk ribbon in front of paper.

The chief vazir got up from his place and raised his hand. The crowd gradually ceased silent. The noble screamed out in stentorian voice:

- Six archers have the right to shoot. If all of them hit, they will shoot again. The winner gets the title "the lord of the city" for three days. Let it be like this!

And the chief noble waved the kerchief again nobly.

The spectators began to bawl with excitement, anticipating the unique performance. The two first shots failed. They missed both. Temur, who took part in the competition, grinned: - no, his hand will not miss. The turn came to Temur. The friends, quitted from competition, occupied the first rows and supported their boshbegi with shouts. Young Bekk rose the bow slowly, took the aim quietly, pulled the bow-string, and the arrow hit the aim with a joyful whistle, having nailed the golden coin to the white sheet

of paper. The valley resounded by the buzz of excited spectators. One of the friends of Bekk screamed out: "Temur is the lord of the city". And the crowd supported at once: "Temur! Temur! Temur!" The chief vazir could hardly calm the crowd. The next warrior looked like a bird, with a hooked nose looking as if he wanted to fly up but couldn't stretch the wings. After his missing the crowd started to moan reacting as: "Ah-u-u!". Abu Bakr Kelevi, scutcher of cotton, followed the warrior. He was lean, and his face looked as if it was sunned dry. After lucky shooting of the rival, the gloomy fire flashed in his eyes, and after the unlucky one his face sparkled with gaiety. His swarthy hands hold the bow firmly. Having taken off the striped robe he stayed in a white shirt only. Abu Bakr Kelevi having looked distrustfully at Temur, shot an arrow. The sympathetic breath of spectators spread over the valley before that Abu Bakr realized his failure.

The scutcher of a cotton looked at his friends-craftsmen, and suddenly his lips trembled with anger. This very moment he was ready to shout all these satisfied nobles that he had become the member of the secret society of sarbadors. Sarbadors were ready to fight not only against Mongol-violators but also against Emirs, with snobbish nobles. But in a moment, having recovered his senses, Abu Bakr Kelevi dropped his eyes - he realized that he might be accused for appealing the honest people to revolt. The archer submitted and left the rows of the shooters.

The last one was one of the best shots of a city - the smith Khurdaki-Bukhori. The curly hair shaped his huge head as a black hat; his eyes in narrow chinks were sharp as a blade. The archer, staring at Temur, burst into spiteful laugh.

- Look here, the unbidden guest from Kesh how the best city shot can shoot.

Having turned his massive head easily to the side of a target, he glanced with killing look at the young Bekk once more and roared like animal triumphing in advance. As a small toy he shouldered the bow and aiming let the arrow strongly, and it reached the aim with a biting blow.

- Khurdak!, - the crowd burst into the roar, it seemed that many people knew him.

After excited spectators became silent Temur took the arrow carefully and glanced at his friends. Sayfiddin winked naughty as if all will be good. Khudaidad nodded approvingly. Jaguy Barloss raised his hand. Suleyman looked at boshbegi with worry. And Abbos having raised two hands to heaven in prayer, shouted out:

- Allah blessed your victory.

Temur strained the bow and shot an arrow gently. Immediate sound of flight - and an arrow not only pierced the coin easily, but it splattered the wood into pieces. The crowd burst in shouts again.

Khurdaki-Bukhori had waited for a long time till the excited spectators became quiet. With darkening eyes he looked at sky, asking for the help of the Almighty. But the luck turned away from him and the blacksmith failed. He embraced the head with hands and murmured in the buzz of the crowd:

- I will get you Temur by all means, and sarbadors will control the city.

But nobody heard him. The rejoicing crowd raised Temur and roaring roll of drums, tender trill of flutes and passionate sounds of carnaï* (long trumpet) and surnais* carried to the mighty throne. Children and young girls threw motley ribbons and flowers to the footstep of the throne of "the lord of Samarkand". The city chief vazir* took the package, opened it and put a brocade robe and beaver hat on boshbegi. He added a tight purse to all this and uttered:

- This is to the brave djigit of Kesh, on behalf of me.

The young Bekk got a heavy bow with a quiver for an arrows and Sog-diyona vase, which was presented by the most beautiful girl of the city. And only in the late evening Temur and his friends could start their way to Oisna-apa house.

The next day the young Bekk went to grave of saint Qussam-ibn-Abbos for a thankful prayer to Allah and making donation. The citizens used to bring gifts on the eve of Monday and Friday nights. The four cupola-shaped buildings were erected over the tomb stone. In the corners of those buildings the columns made of multicolored marble, with the golden ornament and Koran writings over it were.

After making prayer Temur looked around the holy place thoughtfully and said to his devoted friends.

- The heart of a Moslem should thrill from the mighty and beauty of the God's sanctuaries. One day I erect such a sanctuary!

Friends put the hands on prayer and uttered solemnly:

- Let make our wishes true by God's will!

Having snack with a fresh lamb meal at overcrowded teahouse the friends after giving orders to horse riders and servants, moved to look around the palace of governor. Bearded lashkars* didn't let djigits inside. After Mongol's invasions the citadel wall was not completely renewed as well as city walls. It was only building of prison that was preserved. Passing to shahristan (city square), djigits had a prayer in a big cathedral mosque, and after that they went along the big road to the city market. In front of the entrance to the market place Temur addressed his friends:

- I pay for your purchases. I don't accept any objection - am I governor or not?!

Happy djigits went towards the shops at once where various arms were on sale. The old man with a goat-like beard and cunning eyes started to praise upon his goods:

- Big and small and medium-size bows are for you - both adults and small ones can carry them. And here the arbalests-crossbows are, - all of these fit the marksman. All the time the seller was looking at Sayfiddin.

The poet burst into laugh:

- Done with you, old man, I take this arbalest.

Djigits got interested in shields made of different materials: leather, metal, wood. Jaguy Barloss bought the metal shield, ornamented with a carving and inlaid pattern. Shields of leather were fixed with metal ring-shaped plate, which often was covered with colorful ornament. The majority of leather shields were covered by black paint and outlined with red and green stripes. Jako had chosen that very leather shield of the oval shape. Suyeyman preferred the light shield made of a reed. After that djigits brought boshbegi to a chain armor shop and chose djiba (a chain metal shirt) for young Bekk fitting his size. Djiba looked as a shirt made of metal rings

inserted one into another. The stripes of leather were inserted into the rings of the collar; a strong fabric, stripes of velvet ensured the high position of the collar. They bought also cuirasses, metal helmets with chain net. After that djigits enjoyed blades: from the big Russian swords up to curved Turkish yatangs*.

A bazaar was boiling with its colorful, variegated and noisy life. Many people gathered there; in this mass of different faces all mixed together: the nobles and homeless people, rich merchants and beggars, tramps, powerful clergy and simple dervishes and kalandars*, skillful craftsmen and swindlers, brave warriors and valiant ayars.* And there middle men and secondhand dealers were scurrying as well.

- In honor of our victory tomorrow we have toi* (holiday). I made an agreement with Oisha-apa. We have to make some more shopping. Let us choose, at first, the couldron, - Temur offered to his friends.

They had been choosing for a long time, examining couldrons made of cast iron, bronze and brass. They were small, medium-size, big and huge. At last, they bought medium size couldron made of bronze. The servants, mincing, carried this holiday couldron to the house. They bought also an oftoba* - the jug for ablution hands after prayer. The small jug presented by Oisha-apa was not enough for sure.

The sellers, smiling pleasantly, were praising goods and inviting customers. Grey-mustach old man, swaying his head playfully shouted out:

- Bridal veil, bridal veil, light, semi-transparent, slip it on Khonum - you can see unusual beauties.

Dark-eyed youth was singing in a tender voice:

- Satin fabric, silk fabric, buy, buy - and you become Bekk amir or noble!

- How simple it is! - Temur grinned in reply.

Being tired, stunned djigits implored:

- Boshbegi, isn't time to turn back home?

Temur nodded and guided his friends to the place where the delicious smell of kebabs came from.

The teahouse was overcrowded: barbers, bathhouse attendants, porters, stable men, huntsmen, weighers, water carriers, guards - all were absorbing

with pleasure fat, hot peppered food. The foreigners were met hospitably, and they found places at once. Djigits, after having a square meal, placed to rest, but Temur raised his friends:

- Let's go to the cattle bazaar - boshbegi offered - we have to buy sheep for holiday.

They had bought one sheep of gray-blue color, Bukhara breed - with a rum and another one - Samarkand breed also with a huge fat rump. The owner shouldered heavy animals and walked resiliently, led by one of the servants of Temur to Oisha-apa house. After having seen the blue sheep with curled horns, Suleyman smacked his lips with desire: "The most delicious meat...These rams are bred in high mountains, and they eat juicy herbs and drink only pure mountain water".

Looking for the lost Nuriddin they visited the row where dry fruits were on sale. The shelves were crammed with abundance of dry gifts of nature: the dry melon in the sweet dense syrup, kuraga (dry apricots) shining with golden yellowish, dry cherry, Herat's prunes, dry pursy apricots, dry white, black and red mulberry fruits, and there were also mulberries smashed into dark-red honey mass, salted apricot bones, roasted peas, multicoloured raisins. And there they found smiling Nuriddin.

- Four sacks are left, my master, and here is money for the sold raisins - and he passed the tight hurdjun (horse or camel bag) sounding with coins to Temur.

Boshbegi, asked Nuriddin, passing the sack with money to his navkar:

- Did you leave money for servants and yourself to buy presents?

- Be sure, master, even more than enough - and Nuriddin burst into laugh.

Young Bekk shook his head and warned:

- Tomorrow we come again. And do be cautious, the bazaar is bazaar.

It seemed, all business was done, and djigits went home. Unexpectedly for themselves they approached a big square overcrowded with slaves. Samarkand was considered to be one of the centers of slave-trade. They were brought there from all parts of Asian lands. Many slaves had some training there as well: the young ones, for example, were taught military skills, and

later they added the armies of amirs, bekks. Some of them became even military leaders owing to their persistence and insistence. Another part of slaves came from Volga region through Derbent. The majority of them were Russians who were known as skilled blacksmiths and gifted craftsmen. And light-hair Slavic women were usually taken to harems. Slaves from fairy-tale India were of the best value. Black slaves were from the countries of Maghreb - they became loyal bodyguards. And the Negresses were willingly bought as harem slaves and maids. The slaves-Franks were few, but eunuchs were chosen among them and they were very much needed for amir's and bekk's harems. About forty thousands of slaves were carried through the slave-market in Samarkand during a year.

The slaves were not marked; many of them were skillful craftsmen and talented builders. But Temur knew well that hokims used them according to their skills very seldom. "The slave is slave" - bekks-amirs used to say and used them for hard and unskilled work. Temur looked with pity at exhausted faces with dimmed eyes. Many of them were tied by rope to each other by ten people, everybody with a loop on the neck; others were chained and stocked; the third ones, those who tried to escape were put into cages. Almost all were in rugs, hardly covering the nudity. Gloomy looking, indifferent...But it was extremely unexpected for young Bekk to see slaves demonstrating their power, adroitness, as well as the girls with tempting eyes and exciting moving hips, dreaming to get to rich houses.

Two young girls drew Temur's attention. One of them the fair-haired, - her hair shimmered with gold, - she was snub-nosed and with blue eyes full of despair. Slim young body was guessed under a long homespun robe. A virgin blush appeared on her cheeks. She had narrow feet, thin ankles, and she looked like a young birch. The girl shook with a mope of hair of a ripened wheat color, raised her thin curved brows and cast a glance of blue eyes at Temur by chance - and they blushed with a joyous curiosity and a spark of hope. Maybe, that young man would buy her; this was much better than to fall into dirty clutches of an old man. The second girl, chesty, seducing, with dark-black hair falling on the shoulders, was looking on Bekk with a vacant stare, as if looking through the transparent wall.

Temur with his people came closer to the slave-trader and requested courteously to take off ropes from girls. Slave-driver Husein - heavy man with a round beard and unkind eyes, fixed his cloudy gaze upon stranger. The warriors in beautiful clothes surrounded him. Husein was going to swear with foul language thinking that being a son of a rich amir (as it happened rather often) that man wanted to make fun of him. But the stranger's glare was so firm that slave-trader understood that the stranger was not sly and evasive fox-cub but a wolf-cub, and it would be better not to fall into his teeth. Smiling sourly he said through clenched teeth:

- Slavery is a punishment for sins; you have to take it humbly so to deserve God's reward.

Sayfiddin said maliciously:

- Are you reading us a sermon?

Temur stopped him by a gesture of hand and without raising his voice, said:

- As Allah is merciful to all his slaves, so the master should take care of his slaves.

Slave-trader flinched and, scratching his thick brow with a little finger, uttered gloomily:

- I understood everything, so you would like to buy these virgin-girls?

Temur repeated firmly:

- I want you to set them free of these chains.

Husein gave an order to his helper to untangle slaves. The Russian fair-haired beauty was looking at a young warrior imploringly - her eyes were praying for salvation. Black-eyed peri, still not understanding what was going on, couldn't stop crying.

The owner of slaves raised his finger significantly:

- I want to warn you that I can sell them as soon as yasaul Bobo-Kadam - an official for special commission of a governor will have a look at them. - Temur threw a knapsack of gold, and the slave-trader caught it craftily on a flight. He stretched his plump hand to ratify the deal. When djigits had just left that place with the girls, as a menacing cry stopped buyers:

- Who gave you an order to sell slaves without my permission?

Noyon, in a heavy cuirass, surrounded by a dozen of armoured riders, was looking maliciously at a young man.

Temur was silent, gripping the hilt of sabre.

- Hey, the puppy, I am telling you!

Temur snatched out the blade with lightning speed, and his friends did the same.

Not paying attention at bellicosity of djigits Bobo-Kadom naked his dark of hashish-smoking teeth in a smile. Accompanying lashkars* raised their spears. Bobo-Kadom stroked the slave-trader with a spear:

- I am waiting for your answer!

Husein, bowing low, mumbled:

- I have already told them, ...I warned them.

Temur, having thrown a sharp glance at Bobo-Kadom, announced in a voice, full of threat:

- According to the law the deal was performed.

- It is me who can make a decision on eligibility of deal, - hissed Bobo-Kadom.

Temur sniffed scornfully.

Quarelling was aggravated and people came running to the noise. Most of them recognized the archers' winner in Temur. Cries were heard "That's our "governor!". Suddenly, market throng began to support Temur who had repulsed that pompous official.

Getting green of anger, Bobo-Kadom suddenly cried loudly:

- In the name of a law take these refractory people away!

Temur's friends, having gathered around their boshbegi, prepared for defense. Unexpectedly for all, one of the most educated men of Samarkand - Muhammad Samarkandi, interfered into the arguing process which has taken a turn for the worse. White dressing-gown outlined his well-proportioned figure, the courageous face expressed his nobility. Respectful man demanded not loudly but firmly:

- Bobo-Kadom, set these djigits free immediately.

Noyon was not daring to start arguing with a man who was known and respected in the city. Bending his head in a sign of respect, he drew his

horse aside and looking menacingly thrown himself to the crowd which after a peaceful solution started to break up. Djigits rushed to thank a scholar for intercession; otherwise a result could be bloody. Slave-girls, having become the reason of such impetuous events, pressed to each other scarily being waiting for their destiny. When everything calmed down, black-eyed beauty, crying, rushed to the legs of Temur:

- Bekk, if you have already saved me, than please, be generous to the end - ransom my brother Azim.

Temur glanced at Husein - without saying a word he snapped his fingers, and his helper, with an unbelievable speed, took 7-8 year old boy out of the crowd of small ragamuffins. Temur, looking at slave-girls, said:

- Only for your smile it is worthy to buy the whole market.

She bloomed with a smile through happy tears.

It was decided to leave girls and Azim at Sayfiddin's aunt until the departure back to home. Aunt lived alone in the house with a small yard.

Temur and Sayfiddin visited aunt Sajorat the next day. Djigits brought some food, clothes for girls and requested to tell what had happened to them.

Salma was a daughter of an eminent grandee - dadho who was accepting petitions directed to khan. She and her brother Azim were going for vacation to one of their estates. But on the way their carts were attacked. Salma, with her brother Azim, were stolen by mountaineers. When arguing for possession of Salma, young brother killed his elder brother, and was forced to escape from justice. Their father regarded Salma to be the reason of all evil, sold her to the slave-trader Husein who was on the way to Samarkand with his "goods".

Fair-haired girl had her own story... When Olya's mother had fallen ill, the local healer advised her to go to a place with dry climate, horse's milk and more sun. And a big , numerous family moved towards the southern steppes. Brothers started to breed horses, women were keeping a household. Mother started to recover. And it seemed that everything was going to be good. But the evil, as always, came suddenly. A hundred of Mongol riders met small houses in steppe: they killed all adults, and children were sold

to Khorezm. A rich woman bought her for small services. Very soon Olya could easily speak Turkic and Tajik languages. But suddenly the rich woman died, and her daughter-in-law sold Olya very soon, as her hated husband was looking with greedy eyes at the young housemaid. This was how Olya appeared there - on the slaves market.

Akhund - the religious scientist of Samarkand was invited to the celebration of Temur's victory. Muhammad Samarkandi came with his pupils - Olim and Mavlonberdi.

Akhund had put on turban, that was worn only by a prosperous scientists, shogirds* wore striped chapon* and gray turban.

Muhammad Samakandi was about thirty; with a wise face and vivid, piercing eyes, he won people's sympathies at once.

Sitting around the dasturkhon, they started to talk about governors. Muhammad Samarkandi was speaking ironically about Mongol Hokim of Samarkand:

- I am acquainted with the history of ancient Turon. - Akhund said. - Let's speak about ruler Jamshid, for instance... He was erecting cities with the help of skilled craftsmen-builders which were invited from different countries. Hospitals, public baths-hammoms - all these objects were built for people. But what do we see now? These Mongol noyons and kuragons, stuck in debauch, bribery and inaction only hampered society's development. Their only care was to increase taxes which made us - the Moslems - to be in the loop of slavery.

- Where can we read about the governors of Turon? - Khudaidad asked with interest.

Memorable explained patiently:

- In "Avesto", in a holy book. Works of Zaradushtra put the basis of its origin, and the invaluable manuscripts of Middle and Near Asia's scientists were contributed to in it.

Servants served flavored soup, all hushed up for a moment, being occupied with eating. Finished eating, Temur wanted to continue the talk and said silently:

- In the ancient times Turkic tribes were reaching the area Orkhon and Yenisey rivers. They say that a lot of tombstones of Turkic dynasties are there.

- You're right, - Samarkandi said approvingly. - Ancient Turks, our ancestors, established a powerful state that was beginning from Great Chinese Wall and stretched up to Russia. It bordered three powerful empires: China, Persia and Byzantine. From "Avesto" you may find out about ancient governors and their valorous wives. When mighty king Cyrus defeated saks' army, and took their chief Amorga in captivity, Amorga's wife Sparetra could gather an army which consisted of about 300.000 men and 200.000 women. She defeated Cyrus and liberated her husband. That time such fearless women-warriors were in Turon.

Soup, pilaf, then shashlik* were served. Muhammad Samarkandi, shaking his head with pleasure, was taking the pieces of well-roasted liver from sticks.

- Thanks a lot to shashlik-cook, it was very delicious, - toweling his hands, said Akhund. Then he leaned back on pillows and said angrily: - Mongols' invasion stopped the development of culture in Turon, and history of many nations was delayed for hundred years. Innumerable towns and settlements were destroyed; countless mosques were wipped out from the earth, a lot of books of cultural wealth collected for centuries were burnt.

Mavlonberdi has been waiting for the end of his teacher's irate tirade and said angrily, too.

- Manuscripts of our history were burnt in uncountable bonfires. Great number of cultural monuments was irretrievably lost. Scientific works of such scientists as Abu Nasr Iraqi, Abu Sahl Masihi, Abu Mansur Bukhori, Abu Hasan Kisan Marvari were annihilated; lots of works on philosophy of Abu Nasr Farobi, called Aristotle of the East, were lost forever as well as the other works of the best scientists of Central Asia. We have only remains of what was done by the best sons of fatherland.

Jako also couldn't keep himself from interfering to the conversation, adding the oil into the fire:

- Respectful people, I want to say that some Mongols treat the works of our scientists contemptuously and keep them in latrines. The books

of the great Abu Rayhon Beruni were used for kindling of bonfires. His book "The memorials of the past generations" contained a lot of interesting information about the ancient history, mythology, medicine, poems and the life of Persians, Greeks, Byzantines, Sogds and other nations. And his last book "Al Asar" was a history of the culture of Oriental nations. - Jako's face was blazing with anger. - These "djete" wanted to root out our cultural origins and to implant their "Yassi".

Temur drained his glass of sherbet in one gulp; the discussed theme inflamed him.

- Some Mongols accept Islam realizing that they can not spread their heathen faith among us. But their heathenism is like turbid flows of water driven into dam which may burst through it and destroy everything on their way. And unless their militant spirit is not annihilated in its very germ in Mongolistan, as well as in Golden Orda, there won't be a peace for any nation of the world. But we can use lessons learnt from them. For instance, Mongols cavalry can pass through everywhere. That's why we should also adopt some useful and needed experience from "Yassi".

- You're right, boshbegi, - Jako confirmed, - Mongols are good on their horses only. You can not imagine them reading books. Are they able to apprise Beruni or Ibn Sino?

- Generally speaking my friends, - Sayfiddin said suddenly, - to my opinion, Allah made a mistake about Ibn Sino's birthday. This man passed ahead us all with his mind so much, that he should be born much later in future.

Temur's eyes sparkled:

- Maybe, on the contrary, Allah presented him to the world as a torch, as a leading light for people?

Sayfiddin nodded:

- His contemporaries awarded Ibn Sino the title of "The head of scientist". His manuscripts present medical inheritance for many centuries. - Face of Sayfiddin was shining with an excitement. - Knowledge of past, present and maybe of future were united in one mind.

Early stars began to gleam. Full moon enveloped the land resting of the day-time heat with a lustrous light.

Temur stretched with a pleasure but was ready to continue the talk till the morning.

- Ibn Sino was a corn grown on fertile land of Turon. He is a beacon of East showing with its lights the way to knowledge to the future.

Everyone started to think of people's destinations, and everybody wanted to leave at least small sign in people's memory.

The next day djigits with Temur visited famous square of pigeons, where thousands of birds had settled down. They were flying fearlessly, picking feed just from people's hands. Djigits listened also to the announcer who was reading an order about an increasing of taxes.

Then they went to the wonderful park where water was purling melodically in a big havuz*. Boshbegi and his friends were attracted with figures of animals created of skillfully cut cypresses. Here were horses and oxen, camels and wild goats. Young Bekk stood in front of tiger and roared loudly. A ringing laughter was heard. Temur turned suddenly back and smiled - Gulbahor was standing in front of him, young singer and ropewalker.

- Oh, you do it perfectly; - girl egged Bekk on in a tender voice.

Temur raised his hand in greeting sign and noticed that they met each other lways during the daytime on holidays. Girl greeted djigits and said with archly smile:

- Is it bad? You know, Bekk, I felt that I meet you today. When my brother said that the archer from Kesh won competition of shots, I had suddenly realized that he was my friend Temur. And this is for the young governor of Samarkand - and she held out a big red apple.

Temur took a bite of a juicy pulp and announced:

- The young governor of Samarkand is in debt to a young princess.

Girl smiled archly, raised her hands graciously and snatched the tips of ears with tender fingers. Temur asked worrying:

- Something happened?

- Yes, my ears hurt of your heavy promises.

And they both laughed gladly.

- And you are very beautiful even without ear-rings.

Gulbahor reddened:

- Enough to tease me. Let's go and visit fakirs, call your loyal friends.

Maydon* was full of spectators that formed a big circle - in the centre of it jugglers were showing their skill. Dark-skin youth, playing a flute, was enticing a snake from a basket, and it was stretching under a charm of mournful melody. He grasped its head intangibly and pressed the point (which only he knew) and shook the reptile strongly. Snake stretched out and became firm as an iron rod. Then juggler with a quick movement threw it down and snake revived. During the show fakirs swallowing flame and swords, piercing their tongue with long nails appeared on the stage:

- And now you'll see my brother, - said Gulbahor and showed young fakir with her eyes.

Temur nodded showing that he saw Masaud Kakhajoni.

Youth showed demonstratively the seed of a mango tree to spectators, then buried small seed in sand and covered it with white handkerchief. From time to time, opening white cloth, he was telling: "God ordered you to grow, to make children happy and to delight lovers". After a while fakir raised a little piece of white cloth - and dwarf tree with buds and leaves appeared under it. Djigits looked at Gulbahor surprisingly. She waved carelessly her hand.

- This is an Indian rubber tree, it curls up like this, - and beauty took the hand of boshbegi and closed his fingers into a fist, and then straightened it.

After finishing his show Masaud Kakhajoni came to his sister. He was in a black atlas gown-dress and soft shoes. His swarthy thin face expressed friendliness.

- I hear only "Temur", "Temur" from my sister. - And, looking at brave djigits, added: - Now I see why. By the way, my dear governor, I do congratulate you with victory. - Suddenly a smile lit up his face: - I am a foreseer by the way, and do you like to know what I have revealed?

Young Bekk looked at friends impatiently - they should listen. They were listening with an interest to fakir.

Masaud Kakhadjoni made a concentrated face, looking into far, murmured monotonously:

- I see - The governor of whole Turan - Amir Temur returns from far campaign on a white horse, with a victory and huge loot.

- Do you see me near the victor? - Gulbahor interrupted him derisively.

Her brother waved his hand impatiently:

- Don't interrupt. His generals are around him - those ones who are with him right now. And a huge army enters with its general into the capital of seven wonders, wonderful Samarkand. But the service of a scout is the most important - in this victory as he has got to know secrets of enemy. "My eyes and ears" - Temur calls him. And this adroit scout is Masaud Kakhadjoni - fakir in the past. The brother of Gulbahor laughed happily.

Friend smiled being flattened. But Temur said seriously:

- Everything is in Allah's power, but I think, this is not our last meeting.

Fakir said goodbye and went away, - he had to prepare for the next trick. But Gulbahor glanced at boshbegi darkly.

- I am inviting you for tomorrow. Unfortunately, my brother is leaving for Tashkent with a part of his troupe, that is why I am going to receive you alone...

It started to dark; the air was filled with fragrances of spring aroma. Temur escorted by a new black slave Mosul went to visit Gulbahor.

Zinji came to feel at home at once and went to help servant to cut the brought carcass of sheep. Bekk was seeing the house, divided into men and women parts. The yard was very neat and clean. Between branchy apple-tree and rugged apricot-tree there was supa*, and in front of which small ground covered with small bricks was. Near purling ditch the kingdom of flowers appeared.

Temur was looking with amazement at blooming buds of king flowers.

- This is my valley of roses, - girl said, flattered by the attention of Bekk. My grand-and grand-grand fathers gathered grafts of these roses from all parts of the world, - and peri, noticing Bekk's blushing eyes, led him into blooming garden. She added that roses were chased even on coins of some

governors. In Rome Empire there were holidays of Roses. In Greece, days dedicated to floral tributes to Gods of Olympus were celebrated.

Boshbegi has taken girl's hand insensibly and helped her to pass through a small bridge over ditch

- Look, venerable Bekk, here is a desert rose. You can come across it at the shores of Persian Gulf and in the high mountains of Jungariya. It opens its orange petals only after sunset. It is a tear pouring flower.

- Crying? - wondered Bekk.

- Yes. By legend the bride of this rose died in a waterless desert. That's why being lonely, it pours tears moistening the land.

- Oh, yes, - Temur said patiently. - Rose is a symbol of love - of the great love.

They returned to the yard and sat on supa. Temur continued his talk with an unusual sincerity.

- When Alexander the Great during his military campaign to Central Asia, conquered the Sogdian rock, he did not either plunder or destroy the dwellings of mountain people. Rigorous Macedonian, unexpectedly for all, fell in love with Roxanne, the daughter of the ruler of the mountain settlement of Oksiart. Alexander presented her a bouquet of roses. And following the Macedonian tradition he divided bread to halves and married the fair-haired beauty.

Gulbahor opened her eyes widely of surprise. Temur, pausing continued calmly:

- Have you ever heard about double Gallic rose, Guli?

Girl shook her head - no, she has not yet.

Young Bekk set his snow-white turban straight with inspiration:

- Last century, one young man from Gallia, Fluar.... This name means "flower"...

- Excuse me, venerable Bekk. - Guli stretched her palms in front of her and begged: - Where is that Gallia?

- In France, - Bekk answered willingly - So, that Frank appeared in Asia. The curiosity of traveler and scientist led him to the mysterious oriental

countries. Caravan was attacked, and an old potter, who had five daughters, rescued wounded Fluar. Four of them got married luckily and left the father's house with Allah's blessing. The fifth, the black-haired beauty Guli, looked after wounded Frank, and soon they fell in love with each other. An acute father noticed this but didn't want to interfere. Craftsman liked a young man, and an old man hoped him to be his son. An old craftsman had a garden with sweet scented roses...

Gulbahor shuddered unwittingly, poured sherbet into Temur's bowl from punchy jug and being afraid to interrupt the touching story leaned with a chin on her small fist, showing that she was fully in power of a charming teller.

- Looking at blooming buds, master was painting amazing patterns on vases. Fluar was gifted by his nature and quickly mastered in this profession and started to help to his teacher with pleasure. But sometimes a young man couldn't find himself a place; his sad glance was directed towards France - to the West. In one of the summer evenings an old man opened the shed and invited Fluar there. He said: "My son, here are vases made by you - great masters could be proud of them. They cost a lot. I see your tortures. Tomorrow morning take the cart and go to the market, sell your creations and leave for your Gallia". A young man with tears hugged the old man. With the first cockerels, not saying goodbye to anyone, Fluar left. Guli was in despair. Father tried to calm inconsolable daughter. - Gulbahor breathed sadly. - Amir Temur continued: - But in the evening Fluar appeared in their modest courtyard. "Father, I was reborn for the second time in your house and fell in love with your rose. I dare asking the hand of your daughter. And by a tradition of this country accept my qalim" - and he gave a small pouch with gold. Father coupled the hands of the youths silently. Three years they lived happily. Small blonde Fluar and black-eyed Rozaliya were born. But Fluar became homesick again; he was fading away melting as a candle. Nothing could make him happy. His pictures on vases were breathing with sadness. Seeing the pictures of mountains, forests, lakes of his dear Gallia made rich buyers cry with deep emotion. Seeing the dying Fluar an old man let him go home with the whole family blessed by God. At part-

ing, Fluar left a big vase with a portrait of Guli. First in Gallia the family of Fluar lived happily. But soon Guli began to fade as she became homesick, remembering fatherland. And this nostalgia was so strong that young woman started to lose vision, her body was covered with sores. Different medicians and sorcerers treated her but for nothing. But one fine day... an old potter appeared in their house. He explained that the reasons of his arrival were bad omens that happened in his house: garden faded, pigeon died at the house entrance, the vase with his daughter's portrait cracked. So, he felt that something bad happened with his daughter. The old man brought rose infusions. He washed the eyes of daughter with rose water; oiled her ill body with rose oil telling: "This balsam-infusion absorbed home artesian water, free steppe wind and the smoke of home's hearth". And miracle happened: Guli recovered and bloomed as a beautiful rose. After daughter's recover, father prepared back home. With brighten up glance he addressed his family: "I feel that I never see you again and to avoid future diseases of my relatives and for remembering their motherland, I had brought you grafts of roses". From that time the Gallic double rose appeared in France which put the origin to all roses of Franks.

Young Bekk stood up, looking at sweet-smelling garden and suddenly said tenderly:

- Guli! I'll present you all flowers of the world!

Smoky darkness wrapped in everything around, and blue curtain fell down on blossoming garden. In the dark velvet sky the first stars lit. Girl invited bekk into the house in a voice trembling with anxiety.

Expensive vines and sweets were waiting them on a law table.

Before raising the first cup with muskir, Temur has taken a velvet box out of his belt and opened it.

- All roses of the world are in the future, but now I present you - my moonfaced - the promised earrings.

Peri flashed up with happiness taking the gift and posed herself in front of the mirror and said mysteriously: "I am also a fortuneteller - I can determine the fortune by stars, coffee's seeds and dices.

" - What can you tell about my future? - Boshbegi asked with interest.

Fortune-teller took young Bekk's left hand's open palm and began to tell his fortune.

- A lot of difficulties and hardships wait you in future as well as constant fight for power. Then the road leading you to mortal danger expects you as well as ... , wounds and big power, and then...

Boshbegi pressed young fortune-teller's slim fingers and asked:

- And what about your role in my life?

- I will be a devoted friend.

Temur pursed his slip lips:

- Journeys, meetings with the young warriors inflame my ardent imagination. But this moonlit night will be enough for me for a long time. And the thoughts about you will warm me in my dull days.

Temur and his friends once more went to bazaar to take Nuriddin and his assistants. Terrible picture was waiting them: Nuriddin and his slaves were massacred very hard. Hardly moving his tongue Nuriddin told what had happened. The group of people headed by brothers Javlon and Muto-lib, armed with sticks and brass-knuckles demanded money for the occupied place.

- Who were they?, - young Bekk interrupted him.

- I don't know, - answered Nuriddin. We paid enough to bozorkom* and gave also to them the demanded payment.

The seller of the dry apricots - their neighbour on row - neighboring row interfered whispering:

- All of us paid tribute to bandit-brothers. Your employers did the same but it was not enough for brothers, and they became finding fault with your servants. Better not to entangle with them as killing anybody is nothing for them. Before it is not too late you'd better ride your horses as fast as possible - the neighbour-seller advised sympathetically.

Temur said anxiously:

- Probably, somebody saw us with Nuriddin, reported about it to Bobo Kadom and set brothers on them. Let's wait for these bandits.

And there was no need to wait them for a long time. A big group of djigits surrounded a small suite of young Bekk. Brothers Javlon and Muto-lib looked alike very much. Both of them were huge with bull-like necks

and puffed up eyes. The black dressing gowns tightly covered their fat bellies; turbans were hardly supported by their dirty entangled hairs. Formerly Javlon and Mutolib were wrestlers of Kurash, got prizes, then entered the wrong path but somebody picked them up and ruled them skillfully with invisible hand.

Javlon took with hands as paw a handful of black kishmish* and demonstratively began to press dry fruit in his fist, converting it into thick black mass.

- Kishmish is mine and you are spoiling it, - Temur said with voice.

Bandit looked at young Bekk with interest, picked his nostril and taking out filth from it and blew it towards Temur.

- I agree with you, - Javlon muttered indistinctly.

- Raisins are yours but you must pay as true Moslem.

And huge bulk bared its yellow teeth. And the next moment pressed black mass was spat out directly to the young Bekk's face. Temur intercepted the clot in the air and threw it back into yawning hole with the words: "Choke with your money". Coughing, bandit with the swollen veins on his throat, spat out sweet clot hardly.

- You little puppy! - Javlon shouted. - I'll break you down.

- I'm ready, - young Bekk answered firmly. - And I hope you are not afraid to go outside bazaar.

Mutolib answered for his brother angrily:

- You'd better not to crow and go out for fight.

Not far from bazaar they find secluded blind alley. The suites of both sides formed a circle around. There were no curious people and idlers - nobody wanted to have problems with brothers.

Javlon denied blade. He chose the stick as the weapon and immediately with the words "Ya-ah" attacked the young Bekk. Temur could hardly evade but the hard blow came to his left shoulder. His hand dangled as lash. Even with such unbearable pain boshbegi did not pronounce any sound and hardly squeezed his teeth. In response he wanted to deliver a blow with his sword at an insolent fat face. But seeing that Javlon began to twist his stick rapidly fighter than his shoulders. And then young Bekk pretending that he wanted to attack enemy's head suddenly bent and pierced Javlon's

swollen belly. The wild roar of wounded man was heard around. Bastard's face was wry of severe pain and staggering he felt down squeezing his belly with hairy paws. Then Temur jumped quickly to surprised Javlon's brother and with accurate movement slightly pricked his sharp sword into a fat throat. Young Bekk shouted with the hoarse voice:

- Order your partridges to throw their weapons down. Bandits' suite was three times more than Temur's.

- I'm waiting; - Temur said impatiently and slightly pressed his blade. A small stream of blood appeared.

- Throw everything what you have in your hands, - bandit said with low hoarse voice. Accomplices threw their weapons reluctantly. Djigits quickly collected them into heap. Temur, placing his sabre into sheath and slowly raising his left hand checking its state, said gloomily:

- Do not ever come to my way - otherwise I'll kill you like a dog.

Mutolib roared after them:

- You put me on fire of revenge. And you'll get it.

Djigits prepared for setting back home, to Hojailgar. But suddenly Olga became ill. Being in fever she called her brother Ivan and uncle Stepan. Sajorat-buvi requested Temur to leave poor girl in her house.

- When she recover you'll take her, but now she can die on the way.

Boshbegi agreed with an old woman's arguments and took Salma with little Aziz with him, left some money to Sajorat-buvi for her calling a doctor and taking care after the golden-haired Olga. Parting with Oysha-apa's family was warm and hearty. Promising to come back in autumn, young Bekk set off with his suite to his native Kesh. The way from Samarkand to Kesh took two days. For a night they decided to stop in Dirizdeha village, which was in the middle of the way. It was getting dark, the sun as the yolk of a boiled egg hanged still on a horizon, on the top of the snowy peak sending its last rays to the earth. Swaying, the extinct ball slowly disappeared and left weak gleamy light. The green foothills of mountains were signs showing an approaching village. Fallen in love nightingale began its eternal love song in the bushes; sparrows were boringly chirping choosing place for

a night flying from one tree to another. From the side of the murmurous stream high voices of frogs were heard. Somewhere behind on the already passed road crows were croaking loudly. Salma setting with her brother in the cart trembled. But meeting the kind smile of Temur she calmed down and embraced her brother who was sleeping rolled up into a ball.

In the meanwhile Temur was alarmed by the birds' croaking.

He said:

- Somebody frightened away crows - and jumped off the horse. Temur pressed his ear onto the earth and layed motionless, being concentrated for some time.

- I expected this, - he said rising on his feet tiredly. His face was obscured. - It is pursuit, and the squadron is big - and immediately shouted: - Unharness horses and overturn arava.*

Temur gave to Sayfiddin hurjun* with money earned from selling of raisins.

- Take it home.

Sayfiddin nodded with his head and firmly said:

- I'll stay with you.

Temur looked at his friends; they were not looking at him: young Bekk understood that they all wanted to stay with him and fight with the enemy together with him. Temur firmly said:

- There's no time for your stubbornness, that's why Khudaidad give this money to my father.

Khudaidad nodded with sigh, embraced Temur and without a word jumped on horse. Sayfiddin was happy of having chance to stay with detachment and said to his deporting friend:

- From now on you are a treasurer of our detachment.

Cluttering of the hoofs was an answer to Poet-tabib.*

- Jako, - Temur shouted with anxiety, - In a hurry I forgot to give medicines to Khudaidad.

Jako answered with anger:

- You'll give it yourself.

Temur said:

- The medicine for mother, you see?...

Jako took the package from the boshbegi's hand with great anger and without saying good-bye galloped away.

- Abbos, my dear fisherman. This fight will be for our honor. I don't want to give Salma to Bobo-Kadom's hands; I can't tolerate this villain's triumph and his sneezing at girl. This will be shameful for all our djigits.

- It'll be the great disgrace for us, bold djigits.

Abbos with eyes filled full of tears hoarsely:

- I'm ready.

Servants helped girl and her brother to jump on the horse and fisherman lashed his horse strongly.

- This arava can hide us as the unassailable wall, - exclaimed Jaguy Barloss, - it's a pity that we have just few arrows.

Suleyman quietly handed hidden quiver to Temur who took it with the joy took and immediately gave it to Nuriddin:

- Give it to the servants and warriors and add that they should take aims more accurately not to fail any shot for nothing.

Slave Mosul with stared eyes began bellowing and badgering Temur.

- What does he want? - Boshbegi asked indignantly.

- Bows and arrows, - answered Suleyman, - If he's asking them for - it means that he can shout.

- Give him my reserve one which hang on saddle's pommel, - Bekk said.

Suddenly Salma appeared from the darkness and answering the angry sight of the young Bekk she mentioned sadly:

- The horse can't bear all of us, - and then rising up her hand with dagger, she said with despair in her voice: - Bobo-Kadom will never get me alive.

Boshbegi only waved his hand. The dump clatters of hooves of approaching horses were heard. Temur counted all weapons and said with the pity:

- There are only few arrows, indeed.

Sayfiddin squatted down near and glittering with his white teeth said dreamingly:

- Someday if I survive, Temur, you'll give me a chance to make hadj to Mecca to praying for forgiveness of mine and yours sins.

- I do not feel any guilt of my side, - boshbegi answered seriously - But we will certainly go for hadj.

At that time clatter of horses' hooves was becoming rather loud. Trembling Salma, looking for some shelter behind arava, laid next to Temur, who looked at her askance and immediately thrown the arrow out - the fight started.

Hearing about Javlon's death from Mutolib's plaintive words, Bobo-Kadom quickly gathered detachment of fifty killers and set it for pursuit. And suddenly for the leader's great surprise, the detachment was attached with arrows, and they were forced to be involved to the fight. The moans and hoarse neigh of dying horses were heard.

Temur's arrows finished soon. Salma saw this, crept aside and after some moment brought a quiver filled with the arrows made of white poplar.

- I took it from killed warrior, - said girl with low voice.

Thanking Salma with the head nod, Temur quickly looked towards the road - a crowd of hired killers gathered there. Temur had thrown the arrows which never missed in that direction. Nuriddin and Mosul crept closely, the bow of black man was broken, and he was begging Temur to give him his bow. Nuriddin's face was full of blood, and he waved his hand in response to the alarmed look of boshbegi:

- It is nothing - the arrow just scratched my cheek. You should go away, Bekk, it's high time.

Temur gave his bow to Mosul, and servant taking the weapon began to strike the bandits accurately. Five more warriors were hit. Suleyman and Sayfiddin almost forcedly pushed Temur to the ravine.

- Don't worry about us, boshbegi. Go away and save the girl. We'll hold out for a while and then run away passing through the mountains, - close friends said as one voice.

Temur held Salma's hand and bending began ran along the the ravine bed. Running to the thick jida grove, runaways passed through the impassable thicket. Thornly branches were lashing their faces, clinging the clothes. Not paying any attention to the girl's moaning, Temur was pulling her after

him through the high bushes. The girl was choking; she wasn't prepared for such trials.

- Our rescue is in quickness of our legs; - Temur uttered those words as incantation. And it was not clear whom that encouraging expression was directed to - to Salma or to him. Only after passing through fruit-garden and running over three hills, dried out mountain stream and coming at last to the green valley, boshbegi stopped. Seeing an old fir-tree with the shaggy crown and bared roots before him Temur decided to stop and have a little rest under that natural tent. He helped the girl to climb the tree and warned the girl: "Do not say a sound - otherwise we are the slaves of Bobo-Kadom".

At last, climbing the thick branch they placed themselves more or less comfortably and rested against each other. There was no other way out but to wait for the sunrise. There was sleeping quietness all around. But suddenly everything changed; the loud voices and croaking of the hooves were heard. A little detachment with the blazing torches, in the dark meadow appeared. Temur, seeing the girl's frightened eyes, put his finger to her lips - which meant: "Be quiet".

Shrill voice of Bobo-Kadom was heard:

- Mutolib, your deceased brother was an eagle; he' would already bend these Kesh's chickens.

"But that chicken was able to defeat an eagle", - the bandit thought but didn't say anything aloud.

Irritated by silence, Bobo-Kadom continued:

- Your brother's murder and money disappeared. And what do we have instead? Black rabid zinji?

- But we also killed Temur's djigits, - Mutolib said with deep voice.

- They were not warriors - just rough servants! Only fool like you fight with them.

Mutolib boiled up and said with sneer:

- But it seems that the chicken like Temur offended you also with something and stolen the beauties from under your nose?

- You dirty jackal, how can you equalize me with you?! Now Temur is my enemy number one, it's not your business, what happened between us. Don't talk too much; otherwise I'll cut your tongue.

- My master, - Mutolib came immediately to his senses - you are equal to the governor. How can I dare to compare myself with you?, - and smiled charmingly .

- All right, all right, - Bobo-Kadom forgot him. - You can flatter very well. But imagine that now Temur is sitting on that tree and laughing at all of us, - he added seriously.

Mutolib fussily with exaggerated readiness jumped off his horse and walked in the direction of darkening trees. Temur put his finger at girl's lips worriedly.

The barking laughing of Bobo-Kadom and accompanying warriors was heard:

- You are donkey, Mutolib, you are son of a donkey, - Bobo-Kadom said stammeringly through the tears. - Temur is already in the mountains, as a rabbit, wiping out his tracks. And he ordered his squire to give the signal for leaving, - he addressed his esquire.

Bobo-Kadom was the first to turn his horse round.

Warriors followed his example. Mutolib stayed for a while as if thinking and taking a run and shouting "Ur-r" saddled the horse heavily. Following his detachment he turned back and said silently:

- He's not a rabbit but the witty cheetah, - and holding arbulet in front of him, he shouted in the direction of dark branches.

- Ah!, - girl's moan rang out.

Mutolib was amazed, it was clear that he heard voice of a human being.

- Let's go, that was a bird, - disappearing Bobo-Kadom shouted.

Bandit continued to listen. But there was dead silence. Untrustfully nodding with his head, Mutolib lashed his horse.

It was dawning. Birds began chirping. Girl smiled sufferingly through the grimace of pain and whispered with her lips:

- Am I in paradise or in a hell, in the skies or with you, my Bekk?

- You are with me in the skies, with black sting in your hairs; - Bekk

joked and took the arrow out. - If his hand trembled a little bit, you could lose your eye.

Only then, realizing dangerous situation which had happened, Salma's body became soft and nearly felt down from the branch when Bekk hold her.

- Now is not time to fell, - Temur began to calm her down.

And carefully helping each other, they began climbing down. On the last branch just above the earth, Salma suddenly fell and got caught on bough with her cloth, hanged with her head down to the earth. Silk cloth tore and she felt down on the grass. Temur, jumping off, helped her to rise.

Suddenly valley filled with ominous laughter:

- People call me donkey, fool but I turned to be a cunning fox. - Not far from the fir-tree Mutolib was staying with arbalet on his hand aimed at them. Aiming at them he slowly jumped off his horse and said:

- Hey, you - Kesh's feeble, take off everything, I don't want to spoil my nice clothes with your blood.

Salma with wild terror looked at squeamish smile of their persuader, and then looked at young Bekk with hope. Temur nodded gloomily in response. Salma humbly walked to bandit who was holding arbalet with one hand and with another hand took Temur's dressing-gown off her adroitly and embraced trembling young body. His knoll-like eyebrows trembled from desire, and an expression of self-satisfaction was on his face.

- This Kesh's chicken is not so brave to fight against me. How long should I wait you? - bandit shouted ominously, aiming with his right hand at young Bekk.

- Take off your clothes!

- All right, I'll do it, - young Bekk nodded trying to find in the meanwhile a little bag with gold that was hidden in belt pocket. Finding that bag, he offered the bandit that money.

- You can not buy me, my brother's murder, - Mutolib spat with scorn.

Temur, anyway threw the little bag to the bandit:

- Take it, it is yours!

Yellow coins spilled at the feet of Mutolib.

- How stupid you are, Kesh's chicken, after your death the gold will be mine anyway, - bandit laughed again.

Temur continued obediently:

- This is only a little drop in the sea, but I can tell you where I buried a full hurjun^o of these yellow coins.

- You are lying! - Mutolib shouted.

- There's no need to lie, my life is in danger, - young Bekk said with a pity.

- Yes, life is expensive, - bandit sneered and agreed. - How far that place is?

- No, the place is not far from withered stream, you should count from...

- and boshbegi stopped, then sighed heavily and said:

- It'll be better if I show you the way myself.

Mutolib was thinking, keeping silence....

Temur's face brightened up, there was time for a break, and then he tried to use his chance and has taken out his knife from his boot imperceptibly.

- Take off your boots, too, - Mutolib ordered as he was reading boshbegi's thoughts.

Boshbegi bent and his body trembled, his dry lips repeated again and again applying stilly to Salma:

- Distract his attention from me.

Mutolib relaxed, thinking that he broke down Kesh's chicken spirit.

Salma lost consciousness and fell down near bandit's legs. He staggered and for a moment lost Bekk from his view. This was enough for Temur and as pressed spring he stood up straight and threw his knife at the aim. Knife pricked at fat chest up to its handle. Bandit's thick face distorted as child's amazement:

- Oh, my God, it's so painful, - he pronounced with low voice and fell down dying right on Salma who began to come to her senses.

The girl shouted with terror and again lost her consciousness. When she opened her eyes she couldn't understand what had happened for a long time.

- Are you alive? - the girl moaned looking at Bekk bending over her. She moved around her head slowly and she saw peacefully grazing stallion on

the meadow, a little camp fire was burning, and a pot with food was on it. Her eyes were looking with anxiety remembering the former bandit who wanted to violate her. Realizing that there was nobody except her and Bekk, she whispered:

- Thanks God, it's not a dream.

Temur poured on his palm some herbs from his amulet and put it to the girl's wound which was on her head. Then he kindly smiled and said:

- I blocked up the villain with stones.

- Let jackals tear his body into pieces, - Salma shouted hysterically.

Temur nodded his head understanding her and firmly said:

- I was the last and the only Moslem who saw him before his death. And by God's will I had to kill him.

Feeding girl with a hot broth, Bekk offered her a small piece of dry bread and sheep's cheese.

- Hurjun was full of food-stuff, that bastard was very provident.

After having a breakfast, Salma calmed down a little. Thankfully looking at Temur, she said:

- Our Lord heard my prayers. To be happy completely I would like to see Azim alive and at least to see my parents once more.

- You'll meet them, - Temur promised firmly. But he doesn't explain her about his sware to fulfill any of her wish in case if Salma draw the attention of Mutalib away from Temur. Her falling down saved his life, that is why he was obliged to fulfill his oath.

Heraatian girl was looking at Temur with wide-open eyes:

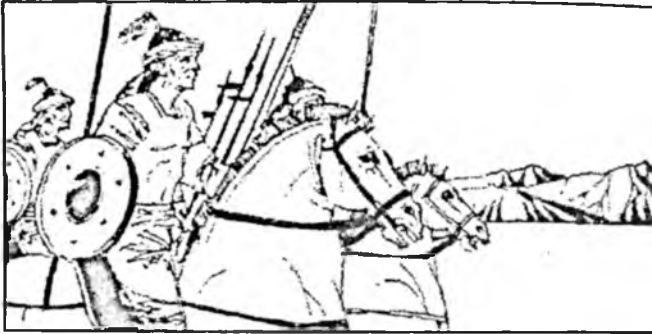
- Repeat, my dear Bekk, I probably don't understand your words.

- I'll take you to your father and mother, - said Temur with low voice.

- And your brother Azim is waiting for us impatiently eagerly in my house.

Heraatian girl closed her face with her palm, and bright big tear-drops of gratitude ran through her slim fingers.

Chapter X



PATHWAYS

Oriental world lived and was animated by a noisy versatile life. Strings of camel caravans day and night moved slowly along their way towards Movaraunnahr and Turkistan. The ringing bells of camels rang one to another. Young beginners without moustache and experienced merchants were bringing their goods along the Great trade road. Being originated in the eastern part of Mediterranean Sea that passway stretched through Syria where a unique varieties of splendid silk and melodiously sounded glass ware were manufactured to Damask which was famous all over the world by its armourers who were skillful in making the swords, sabers and armors made of Damask's steel which were highly appreciated by warriors. Merchants of all countries of the world gathered in Damask: from Venice - enigmatic town where canals served as streets, along which boats-gondolas were sailing from the rich merchant Genoa, from stony Toledo and Constantinople that was regarded as a diamond bridge between East and West. It was situated on the crossing of two main trade paths - over land from Europe to Asia and marine one - from the Mediterranean Sea to Black Sea. The ancient trade path spread through Syria's desert to Bagh-

dad - "The treasure of wisdom". Then through flourishing Ray it passed to the granary of East and West - to Nishapur which goods were spread out to all countries. The inhabitants of Egypt and Maghreb were dressed in Nishapur's fabrics. From that town many roads were branched in different directions from the Great trade road. They led to Herat famous for the different kinds of grapes, wonderful carpets and felt. And to Balkh - fascinating town with the abundance of fruits, and the lead, sulphur and vitriol were on sale there. The main caravan way led to Merv - large and renowned city. The famous melons, cotton, silk fabrics as "Kasin" and "Mulham", sweet sheep milk biscuits "felyate", grape vinegar were transported from Merv. Then the trade road curved as a snake-like ribbon stretched through deserts and steppes to sunny Bukhara and from there to "the garden city" - Samarkand. From the paradise city the trade road straightened out as a long rope towards the beautiful city Tashkent and further it led to Kashgar oasis. This region is edged with a half-ring of mountain ranges from the north, west and south. The town was located in the middle stream of Kizilsuv or Kashkadaryo river. That province was abounding in a good deal of bazaars full of tradesmen - both merchants and hawkers. The fabrics manufactured in Kashgar - "ham", "dabu", "matu", "chakmen", "sargyaz" were valued very high. From Kashgar the trade roads were branched as streams. One of them led through Chadirkul to Uzgen and Andijon. The second one has joined Kashgar with Altai valley and Osh through Terak-Dovon mountain pass. That part of the road was used during the whole year. And the main Great trade road was divided into two parts bypassing the desert Takla-Makon from the north and the south and merging at the Lobnor Lake. The Southern road led to Yarkent rich in the oil-bearing crops: sesame, hemp, saffron, flax, poppy; tasty delicious fruits -white and pink grapes, dates, pears, quinces, plumps, nuts and also with fat-tail, thin fleeced sheep and merino goats. Further the trade road passed through the northern spurs of mysterious Kunlun mountains, passing by the Lobnor lake rich of fish reached Dunkhuan town.

The northern road going through Kuch town led towards Tarfun. In Tarfun region merchants purchased white sheep wool, fur, bulls, yaks,

sheep, oil, watermelons, melons, green raisins. The trade road from Turfan branched again and spread along the northern slopes of Tien Shan, leading to Guachin and Urumchi and joined with Jungar.

Along the main Great road the guides of caravans preferred to go to the Lobnor Lake and Dunhua town making a big hook through Khami town. As the direct way from Turfan to Dunhua was terrible and completely uninhabited, the sands of White Dragon were presented by a salt desert which was a Lobnor Lake bottom in the past.

From Dunhua the Great road passing through Jasper gates, frontier customs fortress turned round the clean and transparent Yuy River and was finished at Black Dragon settlement. The huge caravans of hundreds of merchants with big guards and up to thousand pack animals were passing along the Great trade road. Though it was considered that there were two hundred day-time passing from the Red Sea to China - nevertheless, bad weather, epidemics and wars delayed the movement of caravans. So, the traveler could reach from Tir to China in two-three years.

In its middle part - in the Central Asia - the Great trade road was divided into lots of branches directed towards the towns and countries.

Sea roads also existed stretching along the shore of the Northern Europe, or the way was passing from Arabia to Southern India and further to Malay Archipelago; and then around Vietnam to the Southern China. From each origin of such way regardless of its length, the cargoes were coming and from each the stream commenced that flowed later into the main stream. There were a lot of remote mountain paths, and they also stretched along the moistened low-lands. All those roads were used by the caravans of merchants. On his way a merchant passed through a flat steppe, got stuck in a desert and passed along the coasts of seas and lakes. The caravan suffered from the hot and intense heat, shivered of cold and rains. Sometimes caravans were robbed by bandits but in spite of any difficulties the quick trade chain did not stop.

These roads were accessible only owing to the peculiar nature of camels, which could find underground water springs for the thirsty merchants; they also felt the approaching mortal sandy storms. When such tornado appears

only old camels feel it beforehand - they gather in heap and dip their heads into sandy ground. When the travelers notice that - they immediately cover their mouths and noses by felt. The mortal wind springs up at once and ceases also suddenly, but if people do not manage to protect themselves - the destiny of caravan is predetermined.

The trade road was a pulsing vessel, a source of news, and a subject for discords, battles and wars, peace treaties. Genghis Khan himself strived for dominating over the Great Trade Road. The knights-crusaders went to conquer the Holy Land and set the God's coffin free, not suspecting that they were pushed to wars by Genoa and Venetian merchants who would like to have control over the main harbours of the Mediterranean Sea.

Many cities and countries supplied goods for the caravans of the Great Trade Road. It was difficult for the merchants to manage caravan trade by themselves, that is why many of *tadjirs*-merchants were united to the trade companies. They used cheques in trade operations - so, there was no need for the merchants to take a lot of money with them. They gave money in any city to the association representatives - money-changers and received an official finance document - a cheque; after showing it a *tadjir* could get the full sum of money he gave them back in an appointed place.

In the cities and villages which were on the way of the caravans the *caravanserais* were built. There were *hujras*- rooms for the merchants and serving personnel: armed guard and interpreters. There also were places for camels, horses, mules and necessary forage and provisions in *caravanserais*.

Caravanserai was a place where one could sell or buy wholesale making a good bargain, find out about the latest events happening in different countries, and the main thing was to get familiar with prices for goods.

But there came such a time when the Great Trade Road, going through the Central Asia, began to come to an end. First, the number of robbers, who robbed passing caravans fearlessly increased. Water dried out in wells. The *caravanserais* were collapsing and destroyed; the rulers of small provinces were likely to seize a good piece of the pie. But the main reason of that tragedy was that the mighty Mongol leaders of the big great high-

born kins of the Golden Horde turned the caravan flow from Bukhara and other towns of Iran and Iraq through Caucasus to their capital Saroy-Berke, to Mogolistan, to China. And nevertheless, tireless, brave merchants led the caravans through the Central Asia with risk.

The removing of people towards another direction was determined also by passing nomadic tribes in search for the new pastures, as well as by peaceful marches of settled steppe clans searching for the fertile land for growing cereals.

From a bird's eye view one could see how the flows of pilgrims were moving to the Holy city of Mecca, in order to touch the black stone and to get rid of bad thoughts and sins, to become clear spiritually in the prayers. And in future, having become saint in deeds, to glorify the Almighty and to devote all intentions to the benefit of the true Moslems for the fulfillment of the covenants of the Koran.

At last Shamsiddin Kulol decided to go for pilgrimage to Mecca. The needed money was collected for the pilgrimage, and the saint father, having invited ulems*, sayyids*, imams*, sheikhs*, bekks, friends and relatives organized farewell dinner. Shamsiddin Kulol addressed the guests with the following words:

- Brothers, your well-being and your successes are predetermined by Allah, as well as all the events that are anticipated. So, never forget the duty of Moslem to take part in a public divine service. I want you to follow the covenants of obedience, patience, hope and trust in Allah. I have been convinced in the truth of God's word, but everyone must go further on to perceive Allah's truth. And so I take *ijtihad** and go to the Holy City.

High-ranking religious people of Turon* warmly took Shamsiddin Kulol's confess.

Before the departure of the saint father Taragay and Temur provided imam with a bodyguard Abboskozi who already grown up and could use the dagger skilfully to accompany him. Temur gave imam a robe as a gift and explained respectfully:

- A long way lies ahead, and there can be many difficulties, misfortunes, sicknesses - here, in the robe, I sewed up money and in case of the extreme need do, please, remember this.

Shamsiddin Kulol having got the gift from young Bekk, addressed Taragay heartfelty.

- Thank you, Amir, for the help in arranging the pilgrimage. And I can give you only a good advice: take care of Temur and always be careful. Your son is born with faith in Allah and is eager to perceive the whole world.

On arrival of caravan a group of pilgrims gathered quickly and in organized way. The companions of Shamsiddin Kulol became a devoted mullah Kamoliddin; Hoja Rauntangan - a podgy man about forty, with thick eyebrows, wide forehead and squarrose ears; young Fakhnavi with thin thread-like mustache on an upper plump lip; an old man Keldibobo with a lifeless look and hard breath; a bricklayer Aziz - aged, sensible and obliging craftsman. Rather unexpected for all departing people the appearance of teacher Mamatkhalil's was who was also starting for Mecca. He greeted Shamsiddin Kulol courteously as if there was no quarrel between them and has taken place in caravan. Two solidly built men accompanied him.

The saint father got ready for journey on a big two-humped camel. Abboskozi flaunted on black horse presented by Amir Taragay, mullah Kamoliddin has got a huge mule, jibbing but having got used to long journeys. Thus, some in saddle, others on foot set off to a long way. All the pilgrims had one thought - to reach Mecca.

The caravan they joined consisted of 72 camels, loaded with woolen fabrics, rugs, carpets and also small items: scissors, needles, prayer rugs, high saddles from Kimukht.*

The caravan belonged to a merchant Grigori - an Armenian with big eyes, big nose and big red beard. Grigori was a real merchant-tadjir, whose trade was versatile and broad-scale. One could see his caravans from Cairo to Shash, from Bulgar to Tabriz. Although his guard was reliable and trained, tadjir picked a dozen of strong djigits out who agreed to guard caravan on the way.

After the morning prayer caravan set off through the mountain pass Takhiakarach, making their way to Samarkand. After the pomegranate and apple gardens they saw cotton fields where slaves and their children were working. The men, looking frowningly at a stretched caravan chain, kept working, the women did not raise their heads at all, and only children joyfully waved their hands, and when a stern jailer whipped the boys with lash, the quick fingers went working again picking fluffy "miracle" out from the bolls, filling the sacks, aprons and baskets with cotton.

They got to Samarkand after three halts. Caravan entered the city through the big Kesh gates. Afrasiab, formerly Samarkand's heart, was so destroyed and pillaged that the city changed its location to the west. Having seen the ruined fence which was strong in the past the imam thought with sadness about possibility of its reconstruction. After the Mongolian invasion there was no proper governor who would be engaged in strengthening and development of Samarkand. A big camel, from which one could see an approaching city-garden distinctly, was walking in one rhythm with his thoughts.

They passed the quarter of leather-dressers at the beginning of aqueduct, then the quarter of craftsmen and stopped at caravanserai. Having met them the caravanserai's owner's helper, a young man with a noble face was friendly and courteous. He managed to place all guests for overnight. But one more caravan with hanging goat water-skins filled with black oil came, and its arrival disturbed the resting people. One could hear indignant voices, bad language - the caravan with a combustible liquid was not let in to the caravanserai, and it was sent to outskirts - to appropriate district of the town. At last it became quiet, and the saint father fell asleep at once, as if he fell down to non-existence.

Early in the morning, after the prayer, Shamsiddin Kulol, his devoted bodyguard Abboskozi, mullah Kamoliddin, Hoja Rauntangan, young Fakhnavi, an old man Keldibobo and a bricklayer Aziz went to Samarkand bazaar. There every commodity had its own, traditional place. Besides a common bazaar there were special ones, smaller bazaars. And only the horse bazaar required a huge territory and was located in outskirts. The land occupied by the main city bazaar belonged to kozi* Valihoja.

Small tradesmen and craftsmen usually owned only a small shop, workshop and paid for the rent of land.

Fakhnavi bought three jugs of wine, put on armors, chose a lovely woman headscarf, having confessed to mullah Kamoliddin that he had a sweetheart in Bukhara. Kamoliddin got books, Hoja Rauntangan stocked up with foodstuffs. Abboskozi chose several short knives with heavy handles. Keldibobo found drug-medicine for himself, Aziz took a small axe. Shamsiddin Kulol has found what he was looking for a long time - a wide belt where one could put easily all little things, necessary for the trip: needles with thread, knife, spoon, salt, steel, antidote for scorpion bite, medicine for fever, headaches and pains in muscles, mountain tears -mummy, flat pumpkin water flasks. Everything was placed into a quilted sash, there were even little pockets for kurut* and golden coins in it. The wide belt costed lots of money, but imam did not bargain and threw small bag with money to a gray-haired old man.

In the evening, when Shamsiddin Kulol was alone in a hujra*, a visitor came in, holding a small basket in his hands.

- This is for you - I was requested to handover this from behalf of Amir Taragay, - having taken his eyes aside, - a stranger said through clenched teeth.

Suddenly Fakhnavi came in with a proposition to play chess. Having seen an unexpected guest, the young man stood hesitating in the doorway. Imam looked at the basket questioningly and ordered in a strict voice:

- Well, open and show us what's there.

The stranger stubbed and mumbled silently:

- I was ordered to leave the basket and be off at once, and I wanted to earn tips for delivery. But ... as you wish ...- And the stranger began to untie a thin lace, girding the basket. Having taken off a small green cover, he with malicious glance said hoarsely: "Here you are, please, take it".

And then, menacingly hissing a snake appeared out of skillfully woven willow nest and with instantaneous throw bit the stranger's finger. He gave a cry that was heard in all caravanserais.

Having chopped the snake into pieces, Fakhnavi took the stranger's hand and not paying attention to his cries, began to suck the poison out

of wound. Then he requested the imam the light. The imam lit the candle and put a dagger's blade to a glimmering light. Fakhnavi, having squeezed the victim's hand, requested to give the knife. But the saint father himself put scorching steel to the wound. The visitor, having twitched convulsively, fell silent. There was a smell of singed flesh - the imam opened the door of hujra to let the air into. The stranger, blowing his bitten finger, began to lament. He told that one beautiful woman applied to him on the bazaar with the request to pass the parcel to the saint Shamsiddin Kulol. Fakhnavi kicked the rascal out of the hujra and shook his head significantly:

- You, the saint, have secret enemies on your way.

In Samarkand a new group of pilgrims joined their caravan, and Shamsiddin Kulol got acquainted with a poet Kamol Khujandi. Khujandi was born and spent his childhood in Khojand, studied in Samarkand, and was going to the city of Rey. There he was supposed to leave the caravan and taking another way move to Tabriz as the ruler invited him to the palace. When the caravan was ready to leave Samarkand, a young beautiful lady rushed there - she came to see the poet off. Kamol recited poetry to her.

The beauty, attentively listening to the poems suddenly cried, said "Farewell" to him and vanished at once.

Imam nodded his head reproachfully:

- Why are you offending girls?

Kamol answered, smiling softly:

- Your honesty, she is the daughter of neighbor, and she just liked my poems...

In Samarkand after having filled their luggage with a famous Samarkand paper, big cauldrons of red copper, armors, chain armors, coats of mail, knives, arrows and polished mirror, merchants said to caravan-leader that they were ready to go on. The leader gave a sign to the cameleers and caravan continued its way.

They passed by the shops, baths, caravanserais, workshops of craftsmen, city gates and gardens slowly... Ishtikhon was in front.

The morning was fresh and joyful. The outlines of violet-gray hills on the both sides of the road were clearly distinguished on the limpid back-

ground of transparent sky. The branches of mulberry grove rocked slightly by the light wind as seeing the caravan off.

The trunk of a big platan tree was divided into two parts and in the centre of their conjunction a pair of storks was sitting on the nest. A stork is a family bird, the marriage of the storks is forever, and that is why people love them.

The storks, having made a nest on the old platan tree, were waiting for their nestlings. A hen-bird was on the eggs. A male-bird took care of her with a proud. Suddenly, as it remembered something important, the male-bird threw its white and black wings flat up to the sky very high and saw caravan. Worrying about its hen-bird, the male-stork fled back to the nest. Proudly throwing its head back it began to make loud and frightening sounds, standing with its long feet on the edge of the nest and watching passing-by camels carefully. Then the stork snapped with its beak loudly as threatening to swallow a careless traveler if he approached its nest.

But caravan was taking its way without paying attention at the birds, Shamsiddin Kulol just succeeded to watch villages - they passed through Ishikhon and Kushon. In Robinjon the merchant Grigori bought a lot of red woolen raincoats, leather, bundle of ropes made from hemp in Daboechia, cotton cloth "veidar", which was also called "khorasan's brocade" as well. It was a thick cloth with yellow shade and was not bleached. It was used to make clothes for different people - from the rulers, advisors, warriors and ordinary people. Being satisfied with purchase, Grigori went to teahouse, inviting Shamsiddin Kulol there, too. When everybody went to bed, a merchant Grigori and imam were sitting in the shady teahouse. Tadjir, a responsible merchant with stroking his red beard, smiled.

- We are alone, dear imam, and you may think about the reason of my invitation. I have a request to you. Of course, it is a delicate one... - and the merchant looked mysteriously.

- I'm all ears, - imam said and thanked for a cup of fragrant tea.

- I have a relative, Ovanes Vorotretz, a respectable scientist, he had been interested in philosophy and theology since the very childhood, - a merchant began his speech carefully. - Ovanes asked me to find a book of "Armenia" written by Stepanos, who was a panman of Tarone monastery.

- What can I do? - The saint looked at the merchant thoughtfully.

- The book is in the library of the ruler of Bukhara... I pay a lot for this...

- And you, honorable - where are you from? - Imam asked warmly.

- I'm from Ani city, the capital of Armenian kings of Bagratuni kin, - the merchant started his narrative willingly, but with some kind of sorry. Among the rulers Gagik king was famous. A lot of monumental buildings were built in Ani during his ruling: palace of Gagik, the church of Tigran Openz, the cathedral, enormous three-layer dome temple, a five-dome church of Apostles.

The saint Kulol asked why he spoke about it with sorry.

- Ani is my native city, and I'm a piece of it, and the pain of my land is mine, - the merchant breathed in hardly. - Ani was destroyed many times by invaders: Mongols, Byzantines and Turks-Seldjuks. Hiding from invaders, the population of Armenia was spread all over the world: and the Armenian people could be met in many countries - in Georgia, in Russia, in Constantinople, Balkan countries and Crimea. Everywhere we try not to forget our language, culture and alphabet.

- When your written language was originated? - Imam asked, closing his robe tighter.

- Mesrop Mashtotz, - the outstanding scientist of ancient Armenia, at the very beginning of the fifth century created Armenian alphabet, which is in use up today and may be it will be used in future, I think. In Vagarschapai a book depository with a collection of rare books manuscripts, and documents was built.

Saint father felt a deep sympathy to that man who remembered his tortured motherland with love and pain. His aim was to pick up the most valuable pieces of its heritage - the book of the history of his motherland.

- Thank you for conversation, - imam stood up easily and said goodbye. - My companions are waiting for me.

Grigori also stood up heavily, looked confusedly and addressed the saint father:

- I have one more request.

- I'm listening to you, my dear, - Shamsiddin Kulol said.

- There is a workshop in the Bukhara prison; the prisoners there make saddle-girths and saddles - rather cheap but of good quality. You have many relations... I would like to purchase a pair of saddle-girths and saddles, they are valued in Baghdad.

- All right, I fulfill your requests on my arrival to Bukhara, - imam answered.

Passing along white cotton fields, with amber fruit gardens and ruby vine plantations the road led caravan to the main road cracked out of heat and covered with dense layer of dust. "Zabul" burning wind, which dried everything on its way, was blowing over the desert hills. There was no sound of water in the rivers for a long time. The last wattle and daub villages disappeared.

Prayers were shortened on the way, except the evening prayer. When the wayfarers stopped for rest on the way, Shamsiddin Kulol used to see the furtive and frowning glance of Mamatkhalil who didn't part with his savage companions. Fakhnavi drank day and night and was fond of playing dice, later he spent all money to his companions of Mamatkhalil as he lost the game of hazard and began to serve this "saint trio". There was hopelessness and boredom in his eyes. When the travelers stopped at the wall to give water to pack animals, imam called Fakhnavi and asked about the amount of the money lost in the game of hazard looking at him pronouncedly. A young man bowed his head contritely and answered:

- Fifty coins.

Imam got out his purse, counted out the money and said:

- If I saw you drunken again I will sell you in the first bazaar.

Abboskozi, standing behind imam pierced his knife through a wine-skin. The red liquid, as red blood, stained the hands of the drunkard and poured down to the dry thirsty land, which soaked it up like a sponge.

Caravan proceeded with its way slowly without stopping: Daboecia, Hudimankan, Maziamidket, Kermine, Tavavis were left. And at last incomparable Bukhara was before the eyes of wayfarers.

Passing by the tower of aiyars*, caravan turned to peasant street, quickly left it and passed through the noisy bazaar of Kharkan, turned to the street of wizards and settled in the caravanserai, next to the other bazaar - Darvozacha.

The chief of bazaar has taken Grigori away. The merchant came back a little bit bewildered.

- What's happened? - Shamsiddin asked, looking at the merchant attentively.

The latter answered shamefully:

- That jackal would like to have a lot of money from me...

Imam took Grigori along decidedly:

- Show me to that man.

The chief of the bazaar Sayfi, a fat man about forty met uninvited guests on the alert. His small beard bristled and mushroom-like nose got red. But he kept from fury when saw the noble face of imam.

- What do you like, dear saint father?, - the market chief muttered.

Shamsiddin Kulol stared at the dull eyes of the market official and said with a calm voice:

- I need the justice only. Do give the money you have got illegally back.

Shaggy eyebrows of Sayfi rose out of surprise as he didn't understand anything.

- You fleece the wayfarers, it is a great sin. A Moslem...

The chief of the market interrupted imam:

- Read morals at your home..., and I'm busy, excuse me.

Grigori was at a loss and pulled a sleeve of Shamsiddin Kulol.

- Let's go Padre, there is no truth in this world.

Imam pursed his thin lips and went out of the shelter without a word.

In the evening, when the sun set and it got down cool, the merchant came into the house of imam, he wanted to apologize for unpleasant minutes he had when speaking to the chief of the market. Shamsiddin met him pleasantly.

They could hardly welcome each other when Saify opened the door and crawled into the room. Saify crept to the feet of Shamsiddin Kulol and moaned:

- You never lie. I'm a stupid donkey who hankered after to take money of other people. You are right; I really took in excess money. I beg you, forgive the stinky ass...

The eyes of Grigori got round out of surprise. Shamsiddin Kulol winced disdainfully.

- Stand up

- Oh, no! - Saify answered and fawned his fat back. - I stand up only if you take money back and forgive me. Otherwise execution and tortures are anticipating me.

Imam first looked at the merchant and then at the chief of the bazaar.

- You robbed a foreign merchant...

- You are right, you are completely right, - Saify repeated like the parrot.

Imam continued his speech without paying attention to the moaning:

- Next time the merchant wouldn't bring the goods here. And you know if there is no caravan, then the trade is coming to its end. If the provinces get weakened - the foundation of the state is being destroyed.

- Oh, pardon me sir! - Saify roared out at last being completely terrified.

The saint father ended, stroking his beard:

- If you get our words to the deep of your heart, we excuse you.

Saify jumped up of joy. He gave the purse with money to the merchant and kissed hands of imam and left the house moving back.

And Shamsiddin Kulol explained with a modest smile to Grigori who still could not catch what was going on:

- I'm from Bukhara, that's why I sent a letter with complaining to the chief the guard who was my close friend...

- Yes, it is good when you have a lot of friends, - Grigori finished with satisfaction.

Chapter XI



AFTER THE DARK NIGHT A BRIGHT DAWN COMES

In the very hot period of summer heat, when a “hot” wind competed with a “strong” wind, drying up green grasses on the pastures, withering naked bodies of slaves on cotton plantations, when the village streets seemed deadly empty, a lot of Moslems left their urgent deeds and drank fragrant tea in the teahouses. On the one of those days Temur announced to Salma about preparations for the trip to Herat. The bonmaid fell down without saying a word. During her being at Temur’s the Heratian girl had never reminded about his promise. She sewed without stopping wedding silky and velvet kurpacha* fervorously cleaned, washed, hackled the wool; with rush movements of her rough hands she pulled a clean wool and spun thread by hand using spindle. Balloons of the produced woolen yarn were further processed - she boiled them in the solution of wheat flour to make the thread strong and smooth. The slave was working and dreaming only about freedom and happy changes in her unhappy destiny. Coming into sense Salma said happily:

- I thought your promises vanished like a morning mist.

Pleasant news waited for Temur and Salma after their arrival from Samarkand. Temur's friends reached home safely. Happy Azam ran to meet his sister. The girl worked at the Bekk's house as a servant. She trained to sew rather fast and worked off her bread. And at last Salma got merry news that she with her brother were going to Herat.

Taragay invited the young ruler and gave advices before the departure.

- While traveling you should always act like fathers and grandfathers, according to shariat*. Do not do harm anybody without reason. Don't forget that we all are slaves of God, and only by God's will we live under the sky. That's why always be happy whatever God gives you, be grateful for all his charities, repeat God's name by all means, profess God's unique soleness, follow all his dictates and do not do forbidden things. Taragay was watching his son as if he wanted to know whether his seeds are planted in a good soil. Seeing, that Temur was listening to him with great respect his father relaxed and continued his farewell instructions. - Generously reward people who serve you. Try to be courageous. People are always attracted by the persons with a strong spirit. Having wealth, do keep your power strongly. Otherwise you perish betrayed by your own retinue.

Taragay knew what he said, as all this was sensed by himself, by his very essence.

- Be merciful to the devoted ones but be merciless to your enemies.
- Don't worry, father, I'll be honest, strong and cruel.

Taragay took Temur to the mosque and announced to the audience that the title of Amir ran to Temur by inheritance of his ancestors. All prayers accepted this with understanding and congratulated the young ruler with the coming into adult age.

Before departure five sheep were cut for warriors. Gray-haired Mongol cut the meat into long strips, finger-wide and he hanged them for drying. In some days the dried meat was put into saddle bags. The meat could be kept for month's not losing its taste. It could be cooked by cutting into pieces. The summer meat differed from the winter one; it was darkened in the sun and dried quicker. The winter meat was kept and dried in the wind; it was

lighter and more tasteful and was valued more than autumn or spring meat. The sacks were full of cereals, flour and rice. Goat wine-skins were filled with spring water. They took along also some sheep cheese, lard, salt, fire-steel, onion. Hips of straw were always in the luggage of the djigits.

Having waited for caravan with Kesh goods shall start for Heart, Temur with his djigits joined the whole group. The djigits reached the settlement of Kendek located in the valley of Kichi-Uru river and being in three-day way from Kesh very fast. Shortening time for stops, the warriors rode the horses at full speed. Neither sound nor moan was heard from Salma and Azim made. They endured trip difficulties silently.

Mountain tract Kichi-Uru-river was also called Teng-i Kharam. The arms of river Chekdalik were confluencing at Katilish, where the djigits decided to have a durable stop. Many campaigns of Temur will pass through this tract in future. The navkars installed the yurts habitually. The servants quickly made bonfires, hung the pots with spring water over them and when the water began to boil, they threw small pieces of borecole, added groats, some flour, pinch of salt - and the marching pottage boiled soon. After the supper and changing of the guard Temur sat at the entrance of his yurt. Coolness wrapped the valley up, and the friends of young Bekk's went to sleep earlier before the forthcoming hard journey. Lilac-colored dusk got into a dell. The garrulous streams were calling-over vying with each other somewhere. Blackbird with an orange beak shaking its head and jumping from a hummock to hummock, disappeared behind the bushes with a shrill cracking cry. Salma sat down next to boshbegi quietly.

- The doves are cooing in our garden, I didn't understand their love twittering before, and now... I would like just see my father and mother for a moment and return to you again. - Her dimmed eyes expressed the pain of a future parting.

Bekk, stroking the girl's hair, sighed heavily and said:

- Salma, your parents would not endure a new parting. I am grateful to you for giving me happy moments. But your fate does not come along with mine.

Salma pursed her lips stubbornly and said bitterly:

- My parents will do what I say. It is important that you do not refuse me, - and crying, vanished away to Bekk's tent.

...There was one days' journey from Kendek to "Iron gates". The famous from the ancient times the ravine, called "The iron gates" was located in the valley of Surkhan and Kafirigan. A small kaum* passed along smooth bottom, covered with fine river sand and pebbles. The ravine sides were almost steep and looked like a threatening dark fracture. Many travelers were horrified at the sight of rocks as it seemed that they were near to close up. In spring the stream of an overflowing Shirabad river flowed there. The main trade road which connected Maverannahr with Baktriya, India, Herat, Baghdad and Mecca went through the ravine. The length of a narrow passage was about two thousand gyazs*, and the width was five - twenty gyazs. A lot of travelers passed through that ravine... A lot of nomad tribes passed through a small bordered ravine like a terrible avalanche. The caravans of camels were passing by jingling. Wandering monks also went through that place, spreading their belief all over Central Asia. Couriers scurried about. Just opposite small kaum a cavalcade of Byzantine grandees rushed forward. What diplomatic plans of that procession were? Did they want to request for support of Turon rulers for gathering the mercenaries or regulating commercial ties?

When going out from the ravine the travelers stopped at a nice caravanserai decorated with multi-colored majolica and mosaic. The head of that caravanserai - a soft-hearted old man with his sons kept the road tidy cleaning it from blockages and snow-drifts giving the people the possibility to stay for overnight. He served delicious meals, offered an excellent wine, listened to the different stories, legends that were willingly told by the relaxed travelers and told stories himself. During the supper one of djigits asked: "Where does the name "Iron gates" come from?" The old man became thoughtful for a moment, and then uttered unhurriedly:

- My story is long. Will you have enough patience to listen to it?

Temur had ordered his navkars to throw logs into the hearth and having turned to the chief of caravanserai requested him:

- Father, there is a long night ahead; we are ready to listen to you till the very morning.

The old man started up his story shining with his eyes grew younger:
- The nomadic folk lived between the rivers Say Hun and Jay Hun gathered their people and moved in search for new pastures and nomad territories. After a tiring journey they stopped in front of inaccessible mountains. The nomads stood there for a long time and could not take the decision. The fields were trampled down, grass on the pastures was eaten, and new people were coming from the steppes. The rocky mountains were in front of them. Among ordinary people a grumble of resentment was cast at the leader who was honoured by them before, and the murmur of discontent arose. It was he who initiated the idea of starting for the road and gave an order to aymak to leave their native land - regardless that their land was exhausted but nevertheless - it was their own yurt. And the land which they arrived to was dried by heat, burned by the sun, dried grass and deficit of water as the digged wells didn't provide a tribe with water. The women shed bitter tears, children were ill, the cattle were dying. The leader requested his son to gather all gunpowder and mirrors from the countrymen which they have transported from the far Machin - China. The leader remembered well his far childhood when the foreign guest arrived to steppe: the guest was astonished by the mirrors and exchanged the gold for several of them at once. And he added the barrel of honey for the powder besides the yellow metal. The leader not looked only for a fertile land but he also wanted to replenish a gold stock of the aymak by exchange. And the inaccessible rock was in front of them. The leader was wise - he managed to rescue his people from starvation several times.

Unexpectedly a snore of Jagui Barloss who fell into a doze was heard. Khudaidad pushed imperceptibly a djigit who fell asleep. Temur knodded to one of the servants - take care of Salma and her brother. The navkar came back rapidly and answered respectfully:

- Bekk, everything is in order, the guloms protects a girl's dream. The horses drank enough water and forage.

At that time Jagui Barloss awakened and seeing mocking faces of his friends cried out:

- I didn't sleep! - And as a proof he pronounced in gabble:

- The leader stood in front of the stone bar in a deep consideration.

A narrator contentedly whimpered and continued:

- The leader ordered to select djigits who could climb the mountains and who was not afraid of a height. Such brave fellows were found and the leader requested courageous young men to climb the peak and then to deliver the mirrors and gunpowder. The leader told his son to lead "aymak" away from the rocks. Many djigits fell from the rocks down and perished....

Those who mounted the peak threw down the ropes, and raising the good was very important moment. The chief was searching for something putting his ears to the stone. He was lying and concentrating his hearing on pulsation of the projected rocky ribs embellishing these mountains. At last he exclaimed with joy:

- The weakest point of the mountain is here!

One of the wisest young man addressed the father of the tribe with question:

- Here the furrow is in fissure and may be it would be better to put gunpowder to this place.

The leader smiled subtly in response and brought a djigit up to one of the mirrors. Closing his eyes he began to knock with his fingers on the mirror surface - he whispered slowly: "The Chinesses are clever people, they invented unbroken mirrors, firmer than iron". Having found a proper point the leader requested the djigit to strike the mirror surface with stone. The young man did it many times but could not manage. The head of the tribe managed to crush the mirror into pieces with one flick.

- Put all this gunpowder to this fissure and only a big pit will be formed, - he explained to his people and added: - Also the nature has vulnerable places. If you want to define the condition of this mountain, you must listen to the breathing of a rock.

- He ordered the djigits to install the mirrors and expected that all beams must be met at one point. We cover them with your gowns and only after my signal you should throw away the covers from these magic glasses.

The leader posed the big mirrors for a long time showing the dare-devils the needed angle of their installation. He put all gunpowder in the

point of crossing of sunny burning beams, then the leader with all his might thrust an iron ploughshare into the rocky soil. Taking djigits aside to a safe place the leader wait till the sun was at a zenith and sharply waved his hand. Being reflected from the mirror glass the shafts of light rushed towards metal spear. But nothing was happened and furthermore, the metal was melted. The leader seeing it threw himself to a melted metal. He could be seen from all sides. A son saw his father, gave a fixed sign with excitement and the whole tribe fixed eyes hopefully at their leader. In the focus of a burning rays he said firmly: "The man with strong spirit is firmer than metal". And cried out in flame: "My tribe, it is necessary to keep a patience, to overcome the difficulties. Happy future is waiting for you. Good bye!" The sun gone out of a zenith, and burning rays enveloped the gunpowder. When explosion was happened the leader was not clumbled into pieces but got into the stony ground as a burning torch. And second explosion was when an earthquake happened, and a rocky ridge was blown up and huge stones dashed out from it, and a fissure was formed afterwards. And water from the Shirobod Daryo flew from the formed ravine. Uluses and nomads drank pure water, picked the dropped iron ore and started their way through the newly formed pass towards new pastures - yaylovs. The nomades reached the Persian Gulf, went up to Turkey and mixed with the local inhabitants. And the constant stream of nomads is mixed with the local nationlities. When the story-teller finished his legend he said in conclusion: - "We are all people of the same blood".

Sayfiddin, thoughtfully rubbing his chin asked:

- Do you know if the iron ore remained?

The old man shook his head negatively:

- Formely the entry to ravine was protected with two-side gates to which a lot of iron bells were attached. Nobody was allowed to get through without the permission of the local ruler. Then the horde of enemy troops came and destroyed the gates. Only the name is remained.

With the beginning of sunrise the caravan commenced its way, and only three days later the travellers arrived to Termez. The town was situated on the bank of Jaykhun. The mosque and bazaar were in the centre of the town.

The nearest gardens and ploughlands were being irrigated with water from the river Chaganion. The travellers prayed in the white-marble mausoleum of Saint Abu-Abdallah Mukhammad Ali-Termezi khokim who died in 869. Then they admired with magnificent fountain installed in the paved square. They wanted again and again to stay under its refreshing drops. Jako, who was keeping his face under the spray asked with amazement:

- Bekk, why are we on the road in such scorching heat? I don't have anything against Salma and Azim, but we could bring them home before or after that hot season.

Temur answered thoughtfully:

- I didn't want to tell you before... But I answer. All guards, even zealous ones are hiding in shades during this hot saraton month. And nobody asks you the exhausting questions: Where are you going to? Why? And what for?

The friends nodded with comprchension and silently began to prepare for the way. Between Termez and Balh there was Siyahgird village, but young Bekk decided not to stop in Siyahgird because there were rumors that there were a lot of robbers there. He decided to stop in Kelif which it was two-day way long from Termez.

Kelif met travellers kindly. The town was located on both banks of the river Jaykhun. For this it differed from other Turon's towns. On one bank there were the ruler's palace, the mosque, bazaars, merchants's stores, dukons, workshops, and on the other bank there were houses of inhabitants. Temur let djigits to have a bath, and Bekk's friends were enjoying cold water of Jaykhun. There was also the way from Bukhara to Kelif through the valley of Kashkadarya. Zemm and Ahsisek towns were situated downstream of the river Jaykhun. The first one was on the left bank and the other - on the right bank. The distance form Kelif to Balh was 18 farsahs.

After rest djigits spurred the horses and rushed. By the order of Bekk they tried not to meet guarding posts, to pass them round. And they were arranging their tents far from the roads.

Nevertheless, in Balh a little detachment was stopped by the guard. Karoulbegi - the chief of guards of the watching posts - with cruel face and dull glance cried to djigits:

- Where are you going to, the little birds?

Temur approached his horse to the chief of guard and said quietly:

- I'm Bekk from Kesh, the son of Taragay. And I with my suite go to Herat. Here are the documents, which identify my personality.

Karoulbegi curled his lips:

- You're deceiving.

- I don't know what does the lie is. - Temur answered with anger.

- We will see soon - the chief of the guard cried with wicked voice.

- Do you know that Balh is in war conditions with Herat? And I feel that you are real scouts. And suddenly he stared at Salma. He spurred his horse and approached the frightened Heart girl, embraced her virtuously, and, having bared his teeth, shouted: - Hey, djigits, is this beauty for your entertainment?

Temur tried to reach him with whip but failed. Karoulbegi sharply turned to young Bekk and yelled with panic:

- All of you are arrested for attacking the guard!

And the guard, chained in armors, encircled Temur's little suite at once. Djigits and their navkars took out the sabers, cudgels and bows. The guard head, baring his teeth wanted to throw a spare to Temur. Young Bekk aimed his arbalest at Karoulbegi and growled up:

- One movement, - and you get a big hole in your small dirty forehead. You should not move and call the chief here.

The guard head Okchibek didn't think long and ordered in a hoarse voice:

- Mumin, you should ride your horse at full speed to the fortress and invite Nabibullo himself. And tell him about resistance of the arrested detachment. And get quickly!

- Yes, sir, - and lashkar*, riding his horse, disappeared quickly.

The slowed people and the watching guard were patiently waiting for a final decision. In a while there appeared a squad, going at full speed to the place of skirmish. Sipakhsalar - the army commander - stout, aged man, all in armors, having come galloping up, stared at Bekk searchingly.

- What is the matter, Okchibek? - Muttered Nabibullo displeased and, not waiting for the answer, looked sullenly, addressing boshbegi: - You'd

better hand your weapon over before prosecuting an inquiry. Make an order to your djigits, Bekk.

Temur answered firmly:

- I think it would be easier to solve all squabbling right now.

- But I don't think so, - Sipakhsalar shook his head. - It was your fault that you were arrested. Well, what has happened, tell me, - Nabibullo asked the Karoulbegi.

Karoulbegi answered with a servile smile:

- You gave an order to reinforce the watch point in very acute situation... Well, and we... having seen the detachment, stopped them to know the reason of their travelling... They are spies going with reports to Herat.

- Have they named themselves? - asked Nabibullo carelessly.

- Yes, Temur, the son of Taragay, - Okchibek answered having slightly cleared his throat.

- Who, who? - Sipakhsalar shouted surprisingly.

Did I make something wrong? - The chief of the guard asked with dim-mish voice.

- No, no, you acted properly, - sipakhsalar broke into a smile - You gave me chance to meet the son of my best friend Taragay, - and he plunged to embrace the boshbegi. - We participated together in a lot of campaigns and sometimes even eat from the one dish. He had an elder daughter, and a son Temur, and the youngest as I remember a daughter was.

Young bekk was a little bit surprised for such awareness and nodded - it was right. Nabibullo said nervously:

- Are you mad, Okchibek? Taragay is the son-in-law of our ruler.

Temur stroke the back of the chief of guard with a stick.

- Is anything wrong? - sipakhsalar asked gloomily.

Temur answered:

- His guarding is quite well but he was punished for sticking to my girl...

Salma flashed into red, having heard this words.

- With your farther we acquainted with a lot of girls and many black-hair children live in the world now, - Nabibullo fell into laughter. - I say to much, - sipakhsalar said in confusion, - probably this is because of our

meeting. - Then his eyes sparkled: - No refuse from your side - today you are my guests.

- Aka, - Timur said being touched, - we are lack of time and should be in a hurry.

- Taragay will not forgive me that I did not invite you for meals, - sapakhsalar said with regret.

Young bekk mentioned tenderly:

- My farther was interested very much in continuation of our trup.

- Well, - Nabibullo said, agreeing and looking at Salma with a smile. - But I wait for you on your way back. My street is...

Timur interrupted him mildly:

- You live in the old town, near the market, opposite the the office of money change. My farther gave us the addresses of all his friends in all towns.

An old warrior had shed a tear.

- Young Bekk, thank you for remembrance which your father honors.

Don't take my exhortations for morals. In the cities, in order not to draw the guards' attention you should divide your detachment into groups but keep in touch with each other. In the region of Balkh there the password "Night violet" works, and an answer should be "Shrub rose". When you are in trouble, you can say my name. I shall be waiting for you on your way back. I shall introduce you to my sons. And one tactless question before you leave: - Did Taragay reconcile with his father-in-law?

Temur became thoughtful:

- Well, what to answer? Both "yes" and "no". The main thing is that Iykun-Khotun calmed down. Kazagon remembers us on holidays and sends the messengers with gifts.

- Very well, - Nabibullo smiled broadly. - Have a nice trip, my son. Be careful on the way.

Balkh, located on the crossing of the trade roads coming from China, Kashgar, Turan, Iran and India was a noisy and crowded town. The caravanserais were always overcrowded with alien caravans. During the invasion of Genghis Khan the Mongols had become furious that they were not able to capture Balkh, destroyed the famous dam Band-i Amir on the river

of Balkhab and flooded the whole town. But the town like Phoenix revived and became even more beautiful.

Balkh was famous for abundance of rich bazaars, beautiful mosques, different kinds of small shops and stores, hospitals and bathhouses. A small river was flowing from the part of "Navbahor" gates side and irrigated neighbouring environs of the Balkh region.

Temur's suite has settled in one of the caravanserais. At night as if something pushed boshbegi and he, having opened his sleepy eyes awoke and looked around. He looked around with alert. And suddenly, in the door-cleft, he saw a knife, which was trying to hang up the door hook. Temur has thanked a moonlit night at heart. He grabbed a sash quietly and stood at the door. The door was opened quietly, and the shadow of a man of average height slipped into the doorway. There he was met by boshbegi who quickly threw a belbog* over the night guest's neck and began to bind it tightly. An unusual noise was heard from the outdoors, and Abbos with guloms rushed into the room. With a fierce face he cried out sternly:

- Here I caught two jackals more.

Temur requested the fisherman to light a lamp and tightened the belt more and more tough. The uninvited guest's face became distorted and his tongue stuck out. Young Bekk having loosened the sash slightly and asked whispering ominously:

- Who had sent you?

The night guest wheezed, being unable to say a word. Then he moaned in a croaking voice:

- We saw a beautiful girl at the entrance of caravanserai and wanted to steal her and to sell for a good deal of money. Oh God, we did not know that she was guarded by a big detachment! - And the night guest has cried.

Temur, smiling significantly, said through his clenched teeth.

- Get out of here, - and kicked an unlucky thief so strongly that he tumbled out of the room.

- And what to do with those ones? - Abbos looked interrogatively at young Bekk having pointed at the door.

- They must be the young guys, give them a kick and throw out on the street.

And again the road-steppes, mountains, and mountain passes. The password given by Nabibullo made the encounters with guard easier. The kaum spent the night in Chechektu, the town that was located on the big caravan road connecting Balkh with Herat. Chechektu was in ten-day way to the east from the Murgab River, and from that place Herat was very close. The region in the upper reaches of the Murgab River was called Garch or Garchistan, spread out near the Gur mountain system. The town of Herat and adjoining mountains serving as a watershed between the rivers Gerirud and Murgab river system were known as Paropamis.

From Herat to Merverrud it was ten-day way to the north-east, the lands between them were called Kendj-Rustak, and it was five-day long way to the north-west up to Serakhs, and that region was called Badgis. The province of Herat was located in the valley of the river Gerirud and to the south it bordered on Seistan.

The main road from Herat to Marv passed through the old bridge to the mountain tract Chil-Dukhtaron. Nishopur was the capital of Khuroson before Mongols invasion. Soon Herat became one of the main cities of Khuroson. And the uprisal of Sarbadors directed against black plague - Mongols' power originated in that very place. All the burden of their power was on peasants, craftsmen - the people who were related to education, clergy, low-rank workers and nothing to say about slaves. That is why that very environment produced the furious and irreconcilable fighters against violence of Mongols.

At one of the stops Temur was alone with Sayfiddin. Young ruler, biting a bitter withered stalk of wormwood informed him in brief about the aim of the trip to Herat. In spring in Samarkand on the party at Oisha's house Muhammad Samarkandi found out, that there were rumors about collecting money by Mongols for the bribery of officials and their intention to drown Sebzevar in blood. Which of the Mongol khans would like to sit on the vat with gunpowder with the fired fuse? Khan was even afraid of spreading the movent against Mongols over the whole Turan and Mugulistan.

- And quite recently, - Temur said in low voice, though nobody was there, - Abu Said and Zuheir ayars had visited me and their news are always true.

They said that the caravan with weapons and arms is to pass through Herat for destroying the state of freedom. They said that one of the advisers of hokim of Herat participated in those preparations. Abu Said and Zuheir gave me the addresses of their friends; their help is available at any time.

- What is your task? - Sayfiddin asked.

- To capture the caravan.

- Oh my God!, healer-and-poet exclaimed. - We are not able to manage with it.

- We can, - Temur answered surely, - each our servant is an excellently trained slave and experienced in many military campaigns.

- How can we transport such a lot of arms through? - Sayfiddin couldn't realize. - We will be captured in Balkh regardless our relations and password.

Temur glanced at his friend attentively.

- I understand your worry, my healer. But caravan of Ilchi-Bugay Saldur is following us with Kazagon protective document for passing. My father had made a lot for this. It is the secret of our trip, it is the secret of our fast moving as we need to finish our work before the arrival of caravan.

- It's rashness, we can be captured in Herat, - doctor said with fear.

- This is my trouble, - Temur answered spitting the warm wood.

- And where do we keep such a lot of arms? - Sayfiddin asked.

- Hakkul-aka takes it to the cave to keep it till the better time. Later a whole army can be armed with it. We shall have the troops in future, for sure.

Sayfiddin knew that the ruler will not swerve from his goal. Of course, if caravan with weapons disappears then both Mongols and Moslem start their actions. On the other hand, Mongols are afraid of announcing of that operation and they do it secretly. So, it is questionable if the Mongols will seek for those arms. I am not sure. And the bribable Moslem grandes hardly want to reveal their involvement to these affairs. That puzzle is worth to be discussed! Temur added as he read his thoughts:

- Mongols wouldn't interfere to that business; the grandes who helped to buy arms for that band will lose. That is why, my friend, your apprehension is true, of course, but this risk is justified. Let's hope that nothing could destroy our plan and let God help us.

There was the mountain range of Gur in front of them. Gerurid river has taken its origin in the snow tops of mountains, as well as the rivers flowing to the southeast, to Seistan. A long time ago one of the rich grandes of Gerurid built the bridge of the baked brick with twenty six arches, and also the dam was constructed to protect the bridge from flood.

Kaum stopped right at the place, where Murgab inflowed Gerurid. The wayfarers swam in the cold waters of Murgab. Kushk and Kashan rivers also inflowed this river from the south-east, these rivers were low-water and in their lower reach they approached the city of Marv, and then their water disappeared in the sands. Almost all the rivers of the Fore and Middle Asia were shallow in summer, there was lack of canals to bring the moisture to the dry lands, and a lot of fields were watered by rain or well water. Temur and his suite made sure in it when they saw an old man with a white beard twinning a well winch with the help of a big bull and taking water out for all thirsty and also for irrigation of the fruit trees. Temur drank a cold water and thanked the old man by words:

- You are doing a good, father, aren't you tired?

The old man shook his head and screwing his blind-like eyes, cleaned by handkerchief his brown, deeply wrinkled forehead. Then he answered breathing out:

- My son, this is for the grandchildren - so, it is for pleasure.

Temur and his wayfarers were surprised at kiarizes - a network of underground canals digged to the pastures. Jaguy Barloss, watching those underground rivers, said surprisingly:

- I saw such canals in the Kopet-Dag and the Koshgari mountains. In dry places, where the reservoirs were far the peasants learnt to value the water in the hot regions.

Kiariz is an underground water-collecting gallery. In the regions with water deficit a master of kiariz was precious. That skill of doing "underground" network was inherited from one generation to another. The work is labour consuming. Master-mole, crawling on his knees, was pulling out mountain rock by baskets and sacks into the shaft-well from where it was lifted up to the ground surface. The workers of the underground gallery

had to work bending down days and nights. It was always wet, dirty and dark as in the hell there, and boring and irritating sounds of falling drops were heard constantly. Kiarizes were one farsakh* long, underground galleries were built in the direction of the ground stream.

They passed through the old bridge and left stormy Murgab. The group of Temur was moving along the dried out bed of the former wide river. Deep cracks as wrinkles covered the withered land. The horses were tired after a long way. Young ruler bent down looking inside waterless opened traps and cried quietly:

- Salma, be careful of avoiding your horse feet falling into the cracks. The horse could fall and not get up.

- Well, I'll crawl, - the girl answered merrily, and added naughtily: - You, Bekk, supply the water to the dead deserts and people will call you "Temur - the emperor of water".

- The time will come, and I'll build canals to Murgab desert, - Temur answered seriously.

Abdullah, stroking the sweating croup of his horse, exhausting from ride, murmured discontentedly:

- My dearest Bekk, the horses are exhausted and tired.

The slave Mobashar, rode off the horse and rushed to the white horse of Temur. He picked up a bunch of dried grass, stroke round the neck of the horse.

- Yes, master, after a little, the horses will die.

Abdullah and Mobashar were few servants who could give advices to young ruler sometimes. The head lowered to the mane of the horse running into with it.

- I am not tired and full of strength! I am able to ride to the world's end.

- Bekk ruler straightened. - Let us halt.

They began to arrange the place for halt. The soldiers and slaves acted quietly and quickly: they fixed tents; fires appeared in the desert as by the will of a magic stick. A flat darkening sky spread over that tired camp, promising cool and quiet rest.

..With the beginning of daybreak the peasants of the nearest villages came being convinced in the goodwill of visitors. They brought in sheep,

quickly made fires and began cooking dinner for the guests. The farmers wore light shoes, felted clothes; a lot of soldiers had long daggers on their sashes. It was the peasants guard for protection the fields of millet against boars and badgers during night and from birds in the daytime. The village headman came to make the acquaintance of the newcomers - he was a thin old man, with a hollow breast. It seemed that he was very talkative.

- When Vali-ruler calls us, we are warriors, and now we are busy with the land work, - kind smile lightened the face of the village headman.

Temur answered attentively:

- We are all God's slaves, and our sources are from the motherland.

Looking attentively at the young Bekk, the village headman began his speech:

- Dear guest, the son of respectable grandee, if you have time for us, the sons of God, then, please take part in the party of our village. Our bakhshdor* makes it to the honor of his son's birthday. We want our athletes to fight with yours.

The friends of Temur came up. Being informed what the case was, they began to request for permission to take part in the party.

- Be sure, we will gain the prizes; we will break those worms, - soldiers said self-convincingly.

Temur nodded his head thoughtfully:

- I'm afraid of failure as these peasants can manage by ruse.

Peasant watched carefully the tent of Temur inside and surprised:

- Your ruler is so poor, there is even no carpet, and a saddle is instead of the pillow!

The soldiers and slaves burst out into laughter:

- No, - they answered proudly, - Our young ruler is rich, he can buy the whole your village and supply your houses with carpets. But his way of life is the same as of us - his warriors, and he shares all the hardness of the trip with us.

The farmers were surprised, and then somebody said:

- Let that poor warrior be a great leader.

- You are right, - the slaves answered, - he has a spirit of invincibility.

The peasants were feeling the muscles of Jaguy Barloss and said nodding their heads:

- It's a pity that we haven't such athletes.

Temur and the village headman began discussing the terms of competition. At the beginning they accepted the offer of the village headman for participation of djigits in seven competitions but the young Bekk deliberately proposed eight games more. To avoid the delay of competitions they decided to nominate by one participant from each side. Kafks - mountain turkeys were selected to be the scores. The village headman requested the white horse of Temur to be a prize for winner; in his turn the village headman promised to award a rival of the winner with a five-year old bull. That was agreed.

All the inhabitants of the village came to competition - both adults and children. A lot of people rode, a herd of horses was eating yellow thorn not far from competition place, snorting. A lot of countrymen anticipated an exciting show, drinking wine of millet and barley and cried: "We do beat the strangers". Young ruler refused the proposed honorable seat where the elders of the village sat, politely, and has taken place near to his warriors. Setting next to Salma, bashbegi said with dim smile:

- I feel a trick from the side of the village headman.

When the wrestlers appeared on the meadow, Temur got up out of surprise and then waved his hand:

- I knew it, they cheated us. Look and take pleasure, - he said dully to Salma.

The giant wrestler of the big village was a real giant-powerful as and oak-tree. Jaguy Barloss was considered to be thought to be a tall warrior, but he was losing in comparison with the tall Zarif. Jaguy Barloss could hardly reach the shoulder of the village wrestler.

The first type of competition was kurash. Temur could do had nothing but to set Jaguy Barloss against Zarif. Steel hugs of Zarif finished ruefully for the friend of Bekk - he was thrown on the land. A thunder of applause of the crowd was heard over mountain ravine, the countryside people were glad because of the first victory. The second competition also ended with the

success of the athlete. Jako could not move a heavy cart loaded with the sacks with flour while the village athlete did it easily as moving an empty cart. Zarif proved again that he was the strongest. The muscles of the Hercules were protruded roundly in his trained beautiful body. His appearance was exotic, his hair was crew-cut, his round face brightened out with triumphant kind smile, light trousers, made of black leather, covered his column-like legs tightly, a blue ribbon on the red belt seemed to be his sweetheart's present.

And the third time the village headman set Zarif again for competition. The athlete could puff up with five breathings- in the goat water-skin. And Abbos tried to make several attempts but failed, and the judging man announced Zarif as a winner. The girls, sitting near Salma made caustic remark:

- Your warriors would better pick up thorn then to compete with our athletes.

Herat girl turned back without answering. Temur looked at the competition field with hate. But it seemed as Zarif could not be tired. Taking the heavy stone into his arm, he neatly aimed at the far fixed scarecrow filled with straw. The head of the scarecrow fell down and rolled over the burnt grass. Suleyman took a round stone and also aimed at the well-fixed target. The head remained on its place, but the stone, with a hollow sound hinted the point little bit down the belly. An avalanche of laughter was spread over the ravine. The score was four to zero for the benefit of the village athlete. Temur nodded his head, scrapping with his teeth - Shame!

At a meanwhile, Zarif took a spear in his powerful arms, the head of which was two-teeth, in a fight such spear was a very dangerous weapon. Having waved, the athlete had thrown the spear like a lightning, and it pierced into the tree, far on the rocky hill. Zarif raised up his hands and cried supported with the cheers of approval of his countrymen:

- My mountains give me a power! And luck follows me!

The spear, thrown by Sayfiddin, didn't reach even the half flight of his rival.

Young, very ringing voice sang a hymn of the village, in dari language; the peasants stood up and took up its refrain. Zarif aimed the spear at

the far standing rock, and the thin stick topped with feather reached the target. But the arrow of Khudaidad, after shooting was lost on the mountain foot. The very offensive thing happened later - the countrymen began singing biting folk songs, when young man and girls sang in turn. The girls were trying hardly, they sang about the warriors who'd better stay at home instead of brandish their swords and make fun of themselves in overseas countries.

The holiday continued. Salma was smiling guiltily as if didn't notice the biting comments of the local girls. The village headman was brightened - he already was anticipating the possession of the wonderful white horse of Temur.

- Bekk, your horse is very nice, - he exclaimed and looked archly at the guest.

Temur squeezed his wrists, directing his glance to the blue cloudless sky: "Oh, my God, give me power to bear this shame, help us to win this competition". The crowd was crying satisfactorily, being glad and fond of that interesting show. Then in the next competition - gliding on the rope fixed between two trees another djigit of Temur lost. Temur got up quickly and took off his silky robe resolutely. Wwith a dart in his hand Suleyman was looking suprisingly at his rival Zarif who threw arrow into the drawn circle hinting the target. Moving Suleyman aside Temur making tiger steps went to the lawn, jumped up and ran lightly, crying loudly to Suleyman: "Give me the hatchet!" The latter, without thinking, threw the hatchet. The ruler caught the drougt in the air, not reaching the mark of throw, then he threw a dangerous weapon and it pierced just into the middle of wooden circle. A strange sound was heard over the ravine - a sound, like a scream of great eagle, just awaken. For the following competitions serving peasants put one thin turkey against seven fat ones. But soon instead of cheating the time for vexation and even for a quiet fear came. Temur jumped on the rock quicker than his rival. During the next competition being riding he cut fourteen vines, while Zarif cut only nine ones. The crowd began to buzz worriedly. The rivals started the competition from the old branched apple tree and finished it at the huge high apricot tree. Brisk soldiers fixed the target not

far from apple tree. Zarif threw himself on the back part of saddle heavily and pulling the bow, he let his horse forward to the apricot tree and being on the distance from target, he began to throw the arrows. Only three of them hit the target. Temur was ahead by nine arrows.

Suddenly in the ravine, between two mountains, seemed that samum (desert wind) was blown - its heat even shut the mouths of talkative village girls next to Salma. The peasants were looking stunned; a strengthened silence was fallen down. The people of mountain village were lost and ashamed. Sayfiddin, cheered up after the ruler's victories and said:

- I wish the bird of happiness Semurg will not leave the mountains. It looks like the peasants will live from now not under lucky star but under the trouble planet of Saturn. They will be remembering us for the whole year being surprised and puzzled.

When the young ruler picked up seven coins more than Zarif galloping, the peasants began monotonously sing their sad words: "The sadness reached us, the trouble came to us. We have never lost to anyone. Our athletes were the strongest in this region". The slaves and servants of Temur jumped up in response and squeezing their wrists began to cry, cheering him up:

- Beat! Beat!

During the next competition Temur, letting his horse run very fast, seven times dived under the belly of it. Zarif managed to do the same only once, for the second time he turned over under the horse's belly with his feet up. At first, the crowd got quiet and then moaned: "The death will come to us, that is our end. Bad luck, troubles and tears are waiting for us. God turned away from us".

The time for the next competition came. Both of athletes put on chain armors, helmets protecting their heads, special clothes covered the horses. The slaves put fighting clubs into the warrior's arms. The horn announced the beginning of the fight. A musician, blowing his breast, blew hard a small musical instrument looking as a cow tail.

By the sign of the village headman the rivals spurring their horses rushed to each other. Blinding with rage, they crossed with each other and

as lighting sparkled between their fighting clubs. The horses sat down out of scare. The hand of the ruler grew numb because of the strong strike of his rival. Temur, biting his lips till blood, turned his horse to enormous giant. And he, without thinking, spurred his horse again. Getting up on the stirrups, Zarif raised dangerous weapon to beat his enemy. But Temur being just a moment ahead and beat his rival right on the face. Zarif fell down with his tore lips, on the burnt grass not able to turn. 'Wow-wow!' - The cry of despair stroke the mountain ravine. Then it disappeared...

Surprising silence set up. And then one, two and some other voices pronounced the name of the winner: "Temur!" Then all the inhabitants of the village shouted: "Vala! Vala!", which meant: honorable, valiant warrior. Salma, without shyness threw herself to embrace the ruler. What else she needed for her happiness, if the sweetheart was the bravestst, the best... The girl fixed a bright mountain flower on the breast of her dearest the. The flower attracted the attention of one bird; it flew near and sat right on the helmet. Just a moment and a winged announcer disappeared in the sunset. The people moaned of despair. It was Humai - a magic bird: the man getting under its shade, would become a ruler. "Humai set on the military helmet predicting a title of a ruler to the young man"- peasants whispered.

The score of mountain turkeys was seven to seven. The warriors were preparing for game chovganbozi* till the first goal of the wooden ball. The people were exhaulted for they did not see such a perfect show for a long time. Zarif didn't take part in it. He was lying and moaning may be because of pain, but more because of rage as he had lost the title "unconquerable".

Chovganbozi was the favorite game of Temur and his friends; they had been training in deftness and keenness since their childhood, that's why they met that competition merrily. When the judgeman threw a wooden ball up Jaguy Barloss moved the horse of the rival aside by his horse and with a quick strike of the stick had thrown the ball back. There Jako was waiting; he threw it by a hard blow to the right edge where Sayfiddin was running too. The goal-keeper let his horse against Sayfiddin. But Sayfiddin, seeing Temur rushing over the center, threw a winding ball to him, and

Temur in his turn sent the ball to the corner of the gate with a strong blow. It was a victory. Rising his hands, Temur cried out bursting into feelings: "A-a-a!" It was the victory, difficult and overall. The friends began to embrace the hero crying: "Victory, victory!" Shocked peasants didn't know what to do: whether be sorry because of missing the victory, or be happy making acquaintance with such glorious warriors. At last they decided to give not only the prize -the bull, but also to make presents to winners. Zarif presented Temur by the dagger - the blade of Damask steel. The village headman put silky robe on a young bekk and pamarand - the belt of the winner. Young ruler also presented all the participants of the competition with gifts and applied to the farmers with the following words:

- Thank you for hospitality. Your village is beautiful and fairy place. The ploughed soil proves your hardworking. You are powerful people and can defend your land.

After thanking the village head, Temur with his friends started for the way.

Chapter XII



THE SARBADORS

Reaching the suburbs of Herat, Temur's squad made forced stopping. His warriors were staring wondering at the hill in front of them, where something strange was happening - a strange human mass was spinning in a wild, untidy round dance.

Temur exclaimed in surprise:

- We are nearly to arrive... and suddenly this obstacle!

- What is this, who are they? - Abbos asked gloomily.

The warriors have taken out the blades from sheath and were ready for fighting.

Salma touched the hand of Temur:

- It seems that I know them. My father happened to tell about the hill, which is out of town, where drug-addicts gather: smoke cannabis and take opium. Their orgies take place on that hill. And she added with sadness:

- The ruler of the city many times sent guards there to disrupt them, but soon the mad crowd appeared there again.

Temur listened carefully, thinking of further actions. The warriors were waiting for his orders.

- Get your blades ready, - the ruler ordered at last.
- Do not interfere into any debates. If we pass them by, it is our fortune, if not - we have to fight.

The squad was going to get around the hill, but it was noticed - the strange human mass walked down to the foot-hill. The crowd of drug smokers consisted of young guys mainly, dressed in picturesque rags. A hard smelling smoke was coming from the hill. Cries, swearing, moans and sobbing were heard from there. A lot of the drug-users with wild-looking eyes stretched their arms to djigits and requested for bread. Some of them were laughing for no reason.

- Taimas, look who visited us, - one of the drug addicts cried with anticipation of a bloody show.

The leader of an aggressive crowd was pale because of constant consumption of a toxic smoke; his face became paler than Samarkand paper, and his face changed in the poisonous mist rising over the hill: it became either green or violet-saffron. He tossed his mouse-like head and whispered with a heinous voice:

- We are always glad to see foreigners, - he said and stared at Temur. Suddenly, he took out a long stick and cried: - Warriors, buy the stick. If you buy it, you will pass; if not - you have to pay with your blood.

Temur asked calmly:

- How much?

- Oh! - Taimas-mugger continued. - It broke a lot of heads; its cost is expensive, very expensive.

- Do not waist time and say the cost, - cried the young Bekk loudly.

- A thousand dinars, - Taimas answered, - and the stick is yours, - and added:

- And your girl will be safe too.

Boshbegi said with anger:

- I carry an important dispatch to Heart - you ought to pass me.

Taimas smiled:

- Dispatch?! For me it does not matter - whom this dispatch is addressed - to the grandee or to the ruler himself! I don't care... Hear, on this hill, I am the ruler. If you don't buy my stick, you will lose everything.

Boshbegi got pale, but didn't lose self-control.

- Taimas, you flew very high, and the fall will be painful, - he said as calm as he could.

Only sobbing was heard.

Suddenly Temur realized something and rising his hand he cried:

- Dear djigits, I also have a message to the leader of the night robbers Fitrat.

Hearing the name "Fitrat" the crowd stepped aside - nobody wanted to deal with the night robbers. The highway night robbers could catch any drug addict wherever he could be. It could be supposed that they were really people of Fitrat. God does not forgive their offender. There are a lot of informers. The crowd of ragged fellows, beggars, and cripples lost any interest to the strangers at once and began to climb their hill again. Taimas became quiet and said surprisingly:

- May be I need this stick myself... - And muttered indistinctly: - we have arranged fun... You should tell us at once that you are going to Fitrat himself.

And little kaum, passing easily the region of the drug-users put its way forward to Heart. They passed a lot of kitchen gardens, meadows and groves, and then the wayfarers stopped in front of a famous sacred place - place for prayer. The Moslems gathered there, generally, for celebration of the two big holidays: for fasting after Ramadan and oblation celebrated on the tenth of the month zul-hidj.* A big crowd of prayers gathered in that sacred place on Friday. Wayfarers prayed ardourelly, made oblation by throwing a hill of golden dinars on the huge tray. In their prayers warriors requested God to help them come back home safely. Salma and Azim were already on the doorstep of their native city, and their prayer was a thanksgiving to Heaven for the given luck.

Herat consisted of shahristan - a city itself, rabid - suburbs and kikhen-doz - the citadel. The city had four gates to all four sides of the world. Southern gate Firuzabod led to Seistan, from the western gate - to Nishapur, the eastern gates were called Kushk. From the northern gates the road led to Balkh. Only northern gates were made of iron, the others were wood-

en. Almost the whole city was surrounded with the outer wall built in the distance of fourteen steps from the inner earthen fence. Very beautiful building was in the very center of the city - fundamental mosque built in 1201 by Gurid sultan Giyos-ad-din. A large hovuz* was splashed in front of the mosque. To the west from the prayer building a prison was erected - there a lot of people who didn't obey their rulers: insurgents, robbers, state criminals, taxpayers, tramps and killers were killed. Wide bricked streets were very clean. To the north-east from the city one of the residences of the former Herat ruler with the grave of the Sheikh Abdullah Ansari was. Herat viloyat* looked as an enormous citadel erected on the highest place, and the ways to it were narrow mountain paths.

The population of Herat viloyat was divided into self-proud and self-loving mountain people living in the locality of Gur and inhabitants of the valley.

Gurmen adopted Islam after all nations in the eleventh century, and they were the main source of the army.

Unlike the mountain men, the inhabitants of the valley were engaged in the land ploughing, handicraft and they didn't starve for power as mountain sipakhsalars.*

Gurmen became strong rulers, and they constantly ruled Herat. Their language differed from the dialect of valley inhabitants; and sometimes they needed an interpreter.

The strongest ruler of the city was Muizz-ad-din Hussein, while his reign of the Persian Mongols perished. In 1353 Mongol khan Tugay-Temur died. After the death of the last Mongol kagan, Muizz-ad-din became an independent ruler and subordinated all regions almost up to Murgab from where he attacked the eastern regions.

The detachment of Temur entered Herat through the northern gates and moved to southern part of the city, where Salma's family lived. The streets were swamped in green.

Being stopped at the gate of her house, the girl jumped out from the horse, bowed before wooden door and stiffened. Finally Salma knocked the strong wooden door with its copper ring. Nobody answered. Suleyman

tiredly kicked the strong carved door by his boots. The wicket in the gate opened and tousled head of the servant appeared. Salma sat weakly on the ground and whispered faintly: "Salim, how do you do!". The tousled head disappeared - at the same time a cry was heard in the yard: "Voy dod! The died mistress revived!" The girl nearly crawled into the yard, and Azim followed her. Djigits entered the yard after them with hesitation.

The frightened servants looked out of auxiliary rooms; they looked at the entered people with fear and perplexity. At last Parpihoja appeared. His head was not covered; his beard which was taken care a long time ago was unsleek. Only a silky robe was put on over his underwear. Moving to his lost child, with his stretched hands, the old man whispered:

- I know, God helps me. - Coming up to Salma, he knecled and embracing her feet, Parpihoja moaned: - My daughter is alive, and life has come to me again. - And seeing his son he bewailed even stronger: - Oh my God, you are so merciful. You heard my prayers, you returned the belief to me. A miracle has happened. After all we made a rite of funerals and just some days ago bewailing the Ideath we made the funeral party. Oh my Lord, you are generous and merciful to me!

Suddenly a loud cry was heard:

- My dear daughter! My son! - Their mother was in hysterics.

Djigits were confused - they did not know how to help. After shocked parents were calm down as well as the devoted servants did, the father told a sad story. On kidnapping of Salma and little Azim a corpse of the young girl was found near the river soon. The guards thought that that was a corpse of Parpihoja's daughter and brought it to the unhappy father. The girl was very much crippled, and it was difficult to recognize who she was. And the parents in grief buried the girl, thinking that that girl was their daughter. There were no news was about their son. It was a real hell for the father, because he himself sent his children to the village for rest. Darkened out of grief Parpihoja, kissing the hands of the daughter, whispered accusingly:

- I, myself, caused you these torments, and there's no excuse for me.
In the meanwhile, in the yard, the servants were cutting the bull and

prepared a big party for children's return. The tired warriors had a snack in a hurry and went to bed. In the morning Temur got earlier and walked round the estate of dadkho. The house was erected on the strong basement, was decorated with mosaic and ornament made of big stones; the building itself was built of the baked brick.

The host appeared in the yard. He was in a snow-white turban, in a robe made of an expensive silky cloth, light boots. Happiness changed him in one night - he became an important grandee again. Only his sad eyes expressed his former tortures. Parpihoja's voice was surprisingly gentle and sincere:

- Temur-bek, sonny, I'm waiting you with your warriors in the sitting room. - Making a pause he added: - We need to talk, while the relative haven't gathered yet.

- Yes, yes, dear dadkho, - boshbegi answered respectively and went to call his friends.

They had fresh sour cream, fragrant tea, hot somsa*, fresh crusty cones and different kinds of sweets for breakfast. The house owner didn't eat at all, but took care of the guests heartily. When the tea drink was over, the servants had taken the cloth off quickly, left only cups and tea-pots. Salma entered, greeted warriors warmly, gave a gentle glance to Temur, and as swan-like passed through the room and sat near her father. Parpihoja took her gentle hand to his arms and hadn't let till the end of the talk.

- Temurjon, - the voice of dadkho shivered. - You saw my mood in the day of your arrival. But by God's will and thanks to your courage my daughter saved her virginity, - and he presented his daughter with a happy smile.

The girl was not even confused and nodded her head without a shy. The warriors also nodded in the sign of agreement. Almost all had a thought: but the girl is rather wise as the virginity doubles the ransom. Temur hesitated for a while but didn't show his excitement. Dadkho smiled widely and said emotionally:

- Temurjon, now the time for paying back is. I do anything you like.

The young Bekk looked at Parpihoja attentively and with warmed voice said:

- I fell in love with your daughter. - Salma moved merrily. After a pause, Temur went on: - I was in intimate relations with her. I'd like to request your agreement for our marriage, but I also know that you cannot make decision about the future of your daughter.

A serious grandee with pale lips said:

- Bekk, thank you for your honesty. You read my thoughts. To loose the daughter again means to proclaim own funeral. I accept Salma as she is. And it doesn't influence the ransom's price, - dadkho smiled widely.

Temur shook his head:

- Parpihoja, there is the things, which cannot be sold, - it's love of the father to the daughter and son. I want your family happiness to be unclouded.

Djigits changed glances surprisingly - it was not worth to ride horses so fast to the far country just for a girl. Salma looked at her father triumphantly. Parpihoja with a worry in his voice asked:

- And what do you want, Amir? - And outstripping his answer the father added hastily: - Salma is engaged with Bekk Sarradja from the childhood; the messenger was already sent for him.

Salma became sad and lowered her head. Temur has looked at friends with understanding and has said quietly:

- Well, dear Parpihoja, I request you about one service.

Dadho shuddered and his the eyes were lighted:

- Speak, my son ...

Young Bekk has slowly drunk up cooled tea, and has splashed out the rest of it into another piala and has turned it over - enough. Then he told with a pause:

- We need the writ of protection signed by your governor Hussein Kurt for the caravans passing through Khuroson.

It was unexpectedly silent and only a continuous buzz of the bee aimlessly beating against the window-glass was heard. Dadho was thinking for a while. Djigits have exchanged glances again - as if the request was too troublesome for the grandee. Temur has stared a passionless sight at Salma's father. Parpihoja requested the daughter:

- Dear, take care of dinner for our visitors.

The Herat girl has pursed her lips offensively, but left the room at once. Young Bekk glanced at his friends with expressive sight - and they also left after Salma. Almost extinct eyes of Parpihoja has flashed with light, he has silently told:

- My son, have you got patience to listen to me? - Temur encouragingly has smiled in reply. Dadho has hardly sighed and, being released of ideas tormenting him, begun the story. - I have a friend Amin Vasif, we were together in many difficult campaigns. Now he serves as the secretary at Muizz-ad-din of Hussein Kurt, and is respected by the governor. I divided a scone as a sign of the future marriage of our children Sarradja and Salma. We had a good life up to the time when dark clouds appeared above our houses. Salesman of khan, Mirak Daud saw my daughter by chance. Being amazed with beauty of Salma, he has decided to marry her to his nephew Hamrach. Hamrach's father - Urkad-Futabaf is a famous shroff of a Herat market and he was certainly happy to heaven. But after refuse of our family, he felt very strongly offended. He has hired two brothers - gурmen, and they have stolen my dear daughter.

Boshbegi said ragily:

- This ignoble history is known to me... But where do you know about Mirak Dovud from?

- One of these brothers, Faizaddin, was alive and caught by my people and under torments he confessed about everything.

Temur was engrossed in thoughts. Parpihoja suddenly said in loud voice:

- I will get this document in three days.

Temur sighed with relief.

But it is not a payment for my wanting thank you, - the host emphasized. - I swore to Allah to give five thousand golden dinars to a person who finds my daughter and son. And you should not dare to refuse them, - dadho finished. - I will also present gifts to your djigits, navkars and servants. You have brought life and happiness to my house. - But suddenly Parpihoja frowned again and breathed hardly. - I'm afraid that Mirak Dovud and Urkad-Futabaf do not stop at their first failure.

Boshbegi pronounced sorrowfully:

- Such people do not stop at anything.

Parpihoja got pale, and then his eyes filled with blood.

- I am a God's slave, but now I made up my mind to defend my own country, to fight for my children. - Making deep breath, the grandee said:
- I want to confess you: I'm a careful man, but my children are guarantors. Mirak Dovud is in touch with Mongols, they support him and he is their eyes and ears. Sultan knows about it, but can't do anything. He is also afraid of the Mongol's informer, - dadho twinkled quickly. - I can't do anything with myself, - the grandee smiled painfully, - as soon as I recollect the name I become nervous.

Young Bekk smiled appraisingly:

- It will be over someday.

- With God's help! - dadho exclaimed, - In Sebzevar the riot was against Mongols, - the power was taken by Sarbadors, you know it, my sonny. But Mirak Dovud, provoked by the khan of Mongolistan, is gathering mercenaries to fight against Sarbadors in Khorasan. The caravan with weapon and a lot of gold for paying the mercenaries must pass through Herat and Seistan.

Temur got breathless, he could believe that the luck was on his side: the purpose of his arrival to Herat was just capture of this caravan. Young Bekk, having regained self-control asked easily:

- What do you offer, dear?

Parpihoja has stood up, pressed his pale fingers in a fist and with hatred has blurted out:

- I want to annihilate that rascal. - And having become already more calm asked: - my son, will you help me?

Temur was ready to answer:

- My sword and my djigits are ready to help in this sacred matter. We shall annihilate him and burn his house...

Parpihoja has risen easily, walked over the room, half-opened the door - checked if anyone was there and stuck the inflamed eyes at boshbegi.

- No Bekk, we shall do it in another way. We shall attack a caravan. The young Bekk's face expressed joyful amazement, and he has resolutely nodded:

- I agree.

- The goods are all yours, for risk and for danger of an affair I shall add five thousand of gold coins more, - the grandee has added in a whisper.

- And Temur again has nodded.

- And also, - Parpihoja sat down and took the cup with cooled tea. - Urkad-Futabaf and his son Hamrach want to add the Mongolian caravan with his camels loaded with goods - it's safer under protection of a strong guard. And he wants to send one more caravan to Balkh.

- And what are the goods there? - Young Bekk asked with interest.

- There are mainly a fabric embroidered with gold and also different sweets, pistachios and honey. - The grandee's face was sweaten, taking a handkerchief he wiped the wrinkled forehead and fallen cheeks.

Boshbegi was surprised:

- You know a lot about your enemies!

Dadho answered archly:

- As you know - it is necessary to know enemies and even feel their breath. I pay a lot to my spies.

Temur has screwed up his narrow eyes:

- Find out from your friend the details and about time of arrival of caravan with the weapon, and about stopping place. In two days we shall develop the plan of an attack. And tomorrow I should visit the old friend of the father - sarhang Bakir and one more respectable person - the Prophet's associate. Do you have a devoted servant, who with closed eyes can find any street of Herat?

Parpihoja has affirmatively nodded, and then left a room. He came back with a tray on which five pouches with thousand dinars in each were.

- Now I'm sinless to Koran and to my children, your djigits will be awarded in the morning, each will have a horse and a silky robe.

Temur hesitated for a short time.

- It is a sin to desecrate your request to Allah, I take the money, and it is necessary to finish the work successfully.

The servant Ikbol, a spotted djigit, really knew the city as his five fingers. Seeing Temur, sarhang Botir smiled widely. His fat face with round features expressed joy.

- Haven't seen you for ages Temurjon! - He embraced and clapped young Bekk's back for a long time. - How is the old warrior, my friend Tara-gay? But you have grown into a man and become strong. Good omen, you came to pilaf - this means that your mother-in-law will love you. Meet my guests.

Temur was introduced to two young men. One of them was tall, with a cap of curly hairs and long neck, with the protruding Adam's apple. He was named Midat. The other was not so tall, but a little bit fatter with a sharpened nose and deep dark eyes, a thin line of moustache underlined his paleness. His full name was Hoja Ali ibn Muyyad Tusei.

- Midat is my relative, - sarhang introduced, - he is the son of Hasan Jury, the former hokim of Sebzevar, who died during the war with Herat. It is the irony of history but we constantly are fighting with each other. Brother with brother, father with his son. First, we get married, fraternize with and provinces, then quarrel and kill each other. - Embracing Ali Muyyad, he requested guests to sit on the shady supa. - I'm on a rest for a long time, licking old wounds. Well, my dears, do taste my pilaw.

Sarhang, caught a cupped hand of rice took a piece of meat from the hill of hot dish by a little finger, made the rice flat and sent it into the big mouth.

All began to taste the meal...

- Temurjan, you will tell me about family later on, - wiping hands off, sarhang uttered with kind smile. - Now be familiar with these dervishes who sit cross-legged in front of you closer. These are the real sarbadors from Sebzevar where the Mongols were cast down and where common people govern their state rather successfully. - And Amir Bakir has laughed out loudly. - And now, loosing their heads of fear they do not now what to do.

- And it was not clear, if the sarhang was speaking with irony or was quite serious. Coming with a visit to his father's old friend, Temur relayed on the help of his navkars or sarboz-soldiers. But it appeared that amir Bakyr was already out of those activities. "And then why all those sarbadors are there in Heart without purpose?" - boshbegi thought. Probably, they have

also heard about imminent danger. It is necessary to find out about intentions of these young men. And young Bekk, appreciated a delicious dinner and taking a cup of fragrant tea from Midat he said as though accidentally:

- There is a rumour that dark forces are getting ready for suppression of the rebellion in Khurasan.

- I told you! - having jumped from a place, Midat has cried.

Ali Muiyyad has gloomily nodded and told quietly: - That means our fears were not in vain.

Amir Bakir, having felt badly, has apologized and has left. Midat disapprovingly has shaken his head.

- Uncle feels bad every time when he has eaten pilaw too much. He got sick as soon as changed the way of life.

Ali Muiyyad, having broken twisting grape leaf, has chewed it and has spat out a sour lump. Having wrapped over a dressing gown kalandar he told grinning:

- It is necessary to dress up like this for safety. Bekk, if it is possible, could you be more frankly, - sarbador unexpectedly requested.

Temur has understood that he was lucky again; that meeting was a gift of fortune. Having taken a bite of a juicy red apple, Temur has declared frankly:

- It is not rumour, and just the real truth, news from true sources.

Midat has set aside a dish with plums and bending his head, has stuck his hawk eyes at boshbegi. Ali Muiyyad could not hide delight:

- Allah has sent you, Bekk, to help us. - Putting hands to his breast sarbador told: - amir Bakir, whose name is dear to us, relates you and me. My frankness is the trust to you, my honorable Bekk.

Temur looked at sarbador's faces carefully. Exchanging glances with Midat, Ali Muiyyad said:

- We are sent by our ruler. Scouts informed that "djete" will arrive to Sebzevar soon.

- Your dispatch is only the end of the preparing event. By chance, we got to know about the caravan with weapon moving to Seistan, where in one of the castles the mercenaries are being gathered.

- Everything is right, - Ali Muyyad breathed hardly, - one of the best shots of Seistan, Arash is recruiting to their side even franks for a big money.

- Why only in Seistan? - boshbegi surprised.

Midat with shining eyes, said:

- Sebzevar is in the war conditions with Seistan, but mainly, there are many castles with its heads.

- Is the caravan big, where does it go through, is there any stop in the castles of Herat? - Ali Muyyad interrupted his friend. I see, that I request for impossible things, my Bekk. But if we opened a wine, we should drink it up to bottom.

But, actually, we came for another reason, - and boshbegi told about Salma's misfortune in short. - We knew in Samarkand already about arrangements of Mongols and that both sides are preparing for the campaign. From the north the troops of "djeta", passing through Bukhara, Marv, Abivard plan to attack the heart of Khorasan - to Sebzevar, and from the south of Seistan the mercenaries are to advance.

Ali Muyyad exclaimed challengingly:

- So many rebellions of slaves and revolts were in the world - and all in vain. We are the only state in the world which overthrew the Mongol yoke and which set up a power of simple warriors in several cities of Khorasan. And they want to defeat us in the cradle of our freedom.

Temur did not react to the outburst of Ali Muyyad and continued his speech.

- They are not the Mongols who fought during Genghis khan's ruling. Being as fast as a flash of a lightning they could annihilate Sebzevar completely. You see - now there is another situation - Mongols became weak, timid and cautious.

- Honorable Bekk, we can't reach our home, even we would have flying horses, - Muyyad interrupted boshbegi emotionally. - The caravan will leave. We need to attack it before its arrival in Seistan. And we have to destroy an idea about the campaign in the very bud. Could you help us with your navkars?

Temur fell into deep thoughts. Ali Muyyad, thought that Bekk was hesitating and exclaimed:

- All loot is yours, for us the main thing is to annihilate that armed caravan, - and then, he added desperately: - We shall pay with gold.

Temur shook his head:

- Sarbadors are courageous people. I shall not take any money for your freedom, but the caravan is golden, and the greedy flame burns in hearts of my djigits.

Not hiding the tears of joy, friends have rushed to embrace young Bekk with words:

- There are fifty sarbadors with us who can die without fear, and they are ready to go in fire and water.

Temur has gently moved his friends aside and declared:

- A pledge of our success is to fulfill my orders quickly and accurately. Do not look for me. There will be a messenger who will bring the oral order about the place of our gathering, the time of an attack to the caravan and about our further actions to the house of sarhang. The password is "the branch of the Persian lilac". The answer is "the Rose of Gallia".

There appeared amir Bakir, joyfully rubbing his hands, he exclaimed:

- The sheep brought by Temur was slaughtered and tandir-kabob* will be ready soon. I can see by your faces that you have made friends. Temurjon, tell us about your family, tell us what's the purpose of your visit?

Temur responded imperturbably:

- Everything is all right with my family. I have arrived... - Bekk looked at sarbadors inquiringly. They nodded quickly, as if letting him to speak and assuring him in their support. And boshbegi has continued resolutely: - Soon a caravan should arrive and it is guarded by my djigits. They have enough provisions with them. Well, it is necessary to give them shelter.

Amir Bakir became serious.

- Temurjon, Temurjon. I have been struggled with the Mongols all my life and I am going to fight with these conquerors till my last breath. And Sebzevar is only the beginning. The time comes and we will destroy domination of "djete". My native village will meet your guloms with sur-

nais and karnais. I myself am able to gather fifty guloms. Only your help is needed for the fighters for freedom.

Temur has objected:

- No surnais. A magnificent reception is unnecessary as it can attract the attention of people. Is there any girl in your village to give her out?

The grandee conceived.

I have a distant relative but she lives in outskirts. And afterwards, she is oafish. On the whole, she is wacky.

Temur bucked up:

- It is the right thing we need for our matter. One of my djigits has a bad luck... Tomorrow he will woo your bride...

An old warrior flapped his eyes, and sarbadors exchanged glances perplexedly. Temur grinned.

- My fellows will come to your village as being from the part of the groom relatives to become related to the relatives of a bride. Then after living there for some time they become aware about the strange behaviour and freaks of the bride. And they will disappear immediately... But of course, after the successful attacking of the Mongol caravan.

The host and sarbadors laughed approvingly - it was really a military trick. The plan suggested by Temur is appropriate both for sarbadors and rival. In any case the spies of "djete" will dart about everywhere trying to find out if anybody is informed about the caravan.

- Bakir-aga, your navkars should not be involved to these actions. Everything must be done by aliens, - Temur concluded.

Sarhang looked at his friend's son.

- Temurjon, you grew up over your father and me, - and he smiled. - But what a generation is coming to replace us.

Temur relaxed after arriving of his caravan from Kesh. The friends of young Bekk - Jaguy Barloss, Ingu-Temur, Hassan-Bahodir, Jamoliddin - sold all goods wholesale and sent a messenger to Parpihoja to inform that the goods are sold, thirty slaves are in shelter waiting for the next orders. Temur sent his servant Bakir with a messenger who had to take care of

thirty navkars and show them the shelter and to give the order to his friends to buy mules, horses and big sacks as many as possible for all money available. They should wait patiently for the next orders being as quiet as a hen on the eggs”.

Living at Parpihoja's house the young Bekk was almost never at home, he could be seen either in one or another part of the city. Once he was lost with two navkars for three days and when he came back he fell asleep for three days not even eating dinner.

At the same time the father of Salma brought news about the caravan from his friend Amin Vasif: the caravan is to come in three days, but it will not stay in Herat, it will continue its route. The trading caravan of Urkad-Futabaf has already joined the main stream of the Mongolian katar. The banker-saffara decided not to tempt providence and to lead his carts aside of curious eyes, and the main thing was to have a reliable shelter.

Having gathered friends and taken a map of ourskirts of the Herat region, Temur began to explain the core points of the plan on capturing the caravan with weapon.

- A detachment of Ali Muyyad From neighboring villages will come to help us. Our attack will be at the approaches to Herat.

Parpihoja wanted to tell something, but Temur stopped his will with an impatient movement of his hand.

- Questions and discussion shall be later - after getting the idea of the plan. So, when caravan gets into a hollow, we shall block an entrance and an exit, otherwise the camels run around with goods over hot steppes. Actually the caravan will be squeezed in a ring. Sayfiddin with fifteen guloms will meet the vanguard of the caravan.

Tabib-poet raised his eyebrows surprisingly with a dumb question in his eyes.

- So, you give not many navkars, Bekk.

Boshbegi has spoken with a crafty smile:

- There, thanking to Allah, many deciduous trees are that is why you should think where and how to arrange an ambush. Then you shall have only to hit the security guards who do not suspect anything. Your task is not

to give them to break through a barrier. The rear part of transport carts will be chopped off by Abbos with fifteen djigits as well. Arrange a rock fall so that to clamp a trap. Young Bekk has looked at his friend-fisherman with searching look. Abbos has nodded with readiness. Boshbegi seen the needed djigit and told in a coarse voice:

- Suleyman, please, listen to me attentively. Walls of a gorge are high, at the edge of one of them there are five huge boulders are, you will settle ten arbalests with the best arrows behind them and will attack after my sign. Look, be cautious and do not shoot your people. - Young Bekk has smoothed an old map out, bent over it and began to study lines and marks on a yellowed paper for a along time. Having straightened he glanced at Khudaidad. - Downwards from the road a flat slope is, and the guard moves there. You, Khudaidad, together with the fifty men of the squad of Ali Muiyyad meet them. You will be armed with long spears. The point is that nobody from the guards of the caravan could run away from our trap. Be careful, bird-hunter, - otherwise, birds can fly away.

Khudaidad only wheezed in answer.

- When the fight will over, you, Jamoliddin, will send servants to the camels to unload the goods and throw them down where mule carts wait. Leave one sack as it can serve as a proof for us. The entire load must be put into the prepared sacks - and this task is for Jaguy Barloss. When the loading will be done we shall part with Ali Muiyyad's squad. Under the protection of our guard the caravan will go two farsakh distance deep to the mountains and put the entire load in one of the caves. - Temur looked severely at everybody. - My friends, warn everybody not to be tempted by goods. - Kill those who do not obey the order. Any slip will cost our lives. Jaguy Barloss will guard the load to the mountains with Kesh barloses. They will be provided with food. - Temur yawned suddenly and pattering the lips with his finger apologized: - I do not like to sleep but yawning anyhow. - And he looked at Suleyman immediately. - After unloading of weapon to the cave you will lead the empty carts to caravanserai and say to those who are very curious that the trade deal is failed. Wait for my messenger. And the last, - boshbegi looked at Hasan. - Take the camels without a load to Gurgistan,

one of the estates of Murak Dovud, let him be pleased when sending the camels without the goods. Threw a bale of weapon near his house and try the bale be open. An accompanying guide will explain to the manager that Mirak Dovud has sent the camels. Then, ride to Kesh and recruit the squad. Lure djigits with good payment, weapons and magnificent horses.

The door opened slightly, and Salma's head was seen. Flashing a burning glance at Temur she said discontentedly:

- Father, stop discussing secretes, supper is getting cool.

Dadho answered sorrowfully:

- One minute, daughter, we discuss important things.

After her leaving, Temur continued his speech:

- Other djigits will come back for the wedding, to an announced engagement of Sarraja and Salma.

- What engagement? - Parpihoja wondered. -Is not it early yet?

Temur had smiled:

- Well, on celebrations on the occasion of arrival of your daughter. The main thing is to invite as many guests as possible from a palace of the governor.

Djako and Jaguy Barloss have asked boshbegi with insult:

- And what about us: are we not involved?

- You with the servants and navkars will be boozing all night, pretending that a whole group is on a place. All our armour-bearers will stay, I allow you to drink, dance, and have fun. Everyone knows that without armour-bearers no Bekk starts for his way. And let our horses have a rest in a stable as well. Ingu-Temur Horses will bring horses from the caravanserai and later he should stay near me all the time. On the day of wedding, dear Parpihoja, your task is to make me drunk... with fruit juice, and then completely drunk that everybody sees me falling asleep. You ought to find maidens for my djigits.

- As beautiful as peri, - added Sayfiddin.

Temur only grinned in response.

- Let them have fun if they have time before the evening pray. And then, my djigits, give a sleeping liquid to your parries and get away through a back

door. You will split into groups; the people who know the way will help you to get away through the city gate. A place of gathering is at a spring. And there - everything is in Almighty's hands. If anyone has doubts, questions, feel free to ask, - and boshbegi looked at the gathered people, waiting.

Parpihoja, being confused, expressed his fears.

- I am not able to take an active part in these events not because of fear or fear of revenge. I am all the time under watching of people of Parvonchi. And I am afraid to wreck the matter before it starts.

Temur has calmed him down at once:

- Dear, we all considered it.

Parpihoja looked at boshbegi gratefully and continued:

- Not every Herat man is brave enough to take part in such an armed attack. If an attempt fails, a lot of people are perished. - Salma's father, worrying, put his turban right. - I wonder how we can gather hundred djigits. New friends can betray you, Temurjon.

- All your hesitations are right, dear dadho, but I always try to finish any work which I start, - Temur answered. - Listen to my strategy: Fifty warriors fearless to die are waiting for the order impatiently for annihilating that odious Mongol's caravan completely. The fate of the freedom-loving city depends on the result of the fight. Thirty Kesh Barlosses coming with the guard of my caravan are waiting for a signal in the hamlet of sarhang Bakir. Together with our slaves more than hundred soldiers are at all.

Parpihoja could not get calm and nodded his head.

- With all my respect to you, my dear Bekk it seems a boyish game - hollow, five boulders, cave...

Temur shuddered as if beaten, but then began to explain patiently:

- I have climbed all these places round and think it's enough for your trust.

Dadho did not quiet down.

- And if the guide couldn't convince the manager that Mirak Dovud ordered to bring caravan of camels in?

- The guide used to serve at Mirak Dovud's house before and was dismissed for a small fault with his family. He hates his former owner. He is

known well in that farmstead and they do not know yet about his treason. A pathfinder was paid well, and then he goes to his brother in Marv. So, all is settled there. Operation planned by Mongols, after destroying Sebzevar turns against Mirak Dovud, too. Our actions should prove "djete", that Mirak Dovud has stolen and sold weapons himself.

- And where did you get such detailed information about guide from? - The grandee interested.

- Of course, in the bazaar, which hears and knows everything, - Khudaidad answered instead of Temur and added: - We also earn our bread not for nothing.

Young Bekk interfered to the talk and added:

- I almost forgot that the care of the wounded soldiers should be taken in the village of amir Bakir, - And he suddenly smiled widely: - Saying frankly, I did it without the help of local ayars.

Parpihoja calmed down when he knew the details. And the smile appeared in his face.

- I heard from my daughter good opinions about our guest: Temur is like a lion and he can do everything. Well, my brothers, may Allah help us and let it be so. And may the Almighty send you good luck. And I shall be getting ready for the celebration in honour of my daughter.

...Salma's father was preparing for the wedding celebrations, not knowing yet that the daughter was pregnant. And when he found it out, he was not angry and did not scold his beloved daughter; he just gave her a little bottle with blood of a white lamb and told silently: - Sprinkle it from bottle on the nuptial bed but watch that your bridegroom shouldn't notice anything. - Having sighed hardly, Parpihoja concluded: - I'm doing that for your family wellbeing and piece. I think, the Merciful will forgive me.

The attack on a caravan was performed as accurately as it was planned by young Bekk. However, there was a small blunder. One of the navkars from the caravan guard ran away imperceptibly and reported about the matter to patrol group. Boshbegi replaced the weapon and goods of Urkad-Futabaf into his sacks and having loaded them on mules started his way. And just

that time the unexpected call of a patrol reached the winners. Boshbegi's friends shuddered and stood in worrying expectation.

Not diminishing the dignity of the chief of patrol group young Bekk, nevertheless, shouted loudly:

- Who is on the way of the messengers of the governor of Herat? - And gave him the writ of protection. An aged salar - the chief, having examined attentively the sanction of Hokim Kurt Muizz ad-din Hussein with permission for caravan's passage without customs hesitated. Two opposite feelings were struggling inside him. One was fear that somebody could inform the governor, that salar patrol group rummaged his goods in! Execution was inevitable. And at the same time, the award, promised by Mirak Dovud for the capture of robbers, was a great temptation. Then, his well-off life was guaranteed. Salar didn't want to tell about a robbery of a caravan to this young Amir, and he resorted to dropping a hint:

- Dear Amir, the extraordinary event happened. And we will be very grateful to you, Malik-zoda, if you let us examine the load.

Temur answered with an imperturbable face:

- We know nothing about that happening. But if any skein of thread or a piece of soap will drop from the ruler's bales, I'm not sure, that you will be alive. I would not like to sorrow about this.

Salar kicked the warder and said threateningly:

- Inspect everywhere without touching anything. - And turning to the young Bekk, he pronounced quietly: - I'm sorry to trouble you - it's our job.

Temur waved his hand as a sign for permission:

- You are welcome; you may begin your inspection.

The guard was bewildered as he saw quite another caravan and murmured:

- We had only camels, but here I see the mules only, then their goods are in sacks while our bales were quite different.

Then navkar Urkad-Futabaf faced malik-zoda to express his respect and was struck dumb - that man was just that boshbegi who headed the attack - was in front of him on a horseback. One cannot forget his lynx like eyes and cruel smile hiding a threat. The guard trembled and almost losing his sense, exclaimed:

- They are not the people we are looking for!

Salar breathed with relief: the writ of protection signed by the ruler of Herat is, nevertheless a very important document. The chief of the guard cried angrily:

- Stop cackling! Get on the horseback, we should find them! - The chief ran up to Temur brightening with friendship, said: - Dear malik-zoda, your way is opened.

The patrol group lightened the way with torches and went on its way.

The young Bekk with his friends was recreating at Parpihoja's house. The information of Mirak Dovud's death found near his kin village reached them ten days after. His suit decided that the horse of parvonachi fell into the precipice accidentally. Even in the mutilated corpse the high-rank grandee could be recognized at once. Temur supposed another - the weapon could be probably found in the native village of Mirak Dovud by Mongol spies and he was terribly tortured.

After loosing all goods Urkad Futabaff, being worried awfully began to prepare new caravan to Balkh. But after loosing the protection in Herat Futabaff and after the discussion with his son Hamrach, he made up his mind to remove to another city. But at that moment he could not decide where to go.

Meanwhile, Parpihoja gathered the council in the garden of his wonderful house. The ruler was away, but sent his young vazir. The changes took place in the palace. The chief grandee was cheerful and witty. Hugging the owner of a house, he told very warmly:

- The hokim gave an order to arrange an evening-council meeting at your place but he himself fell ill unexpectedly. And I hope that our governor after his recovery will visit you at once.

Having seen Temur and his friends, the vazir greeted djigits politely and with a crafty smile said silently:

- Dear dadho, have you noticed that the air in the city became much clearer?

The Herati aristocrats knew about the secret struggle between Mirak Dovud and dadho, and all worried about the quiet and respected Moslem Parpikhodja in the city.

The court people met political crash and death of Mirak Dovud with satisfaction - he was suspected of treachery for a long time. The city Hokim shown imperial favour and gave the order to arrange celebrations at Parpihoja's out of turn.

The guests came in rich attires. Men were dressed in silk shirts; the robes of the high-rank Heratian aristocrats were made of brocade and heavy silk. The robes were decorated with embroideries and studded with jewelers. On the head everyone had the snow-white turban wrapped round the fur cap. The grandees sported their boots with embroidered tops and the shoes with sharp noses. The clothes of the court were added with the expensive weapon. Fingers of the well-cared for hands were covered with rings.

The Heratian beauties wore small waistcoats of the brightest colors on - green, as a spring grass, yellow, as autumn melons, scarlet, as young blood. But Salma was the best among fashionable woman - she was in a light dress, transparent as wings of a butterfly, a waistcoat fitting a figure over the dress. The head of a beauty was decorated with a ribbon and the skullcap embroidered with pearl, the top of which was covered with scarf. The girl had delightful ornaments: the gold bracelets, ringing silver rings, ruby ear rings. The Heratian girl, having found out about forthcoming leaving of Temur was sad.

And that time in a garden dutar rattled and the small musical instrument with leather bellows - organon played with inspiration. Kemancha - oriental stringed instrument sounded attractively. The charming singer sang a song with fervour and the young dancer performed belly dance.

Dadho did his best about the meals - the tables were breaking under the food and drinks. Attractive smell of "tafshill", cooked with the chopped boiled meat dressed with fried onion, sweet almonds, carrots, eggs, coriander and honey was spread. The fragrant smell of kashkin was spread everywhere as well. It's a dish with meat stewed with kidney-beans and peas; the bird with white tender flesh was for very fastidious gourmet. The

spices were on separate plates: zafa-grass - type of mountain garlic, gushpa-grass, rhubarb and other greens. Fruits attracted with their abundance and variety. Peaches "hukh", plums "shaftarang" - half-red and half-white, quince "obi" and "obinor". There was an Indian persimmon - saba, bitter melon "kabasan" - for those who like them. Different sorts of wine: "Biggar", "Siyoki", "Nabod", "Sharob" were on the embroidered clothes. But the guests liked strong drinks "Rasatun" - made of honey, "Sur" - from rice, "Pandnun" - wine with the admixture of teryak syrup more. Diverse types of sweets - "fula-te" - sweet gingerbread in sour milk, "farhashta" - small bread made of starch with almonds sweet, baked on stones was striking. Servants brought sweets "paluda" to the tea constantly, made of honey, almonds and starch, a halva made of seven dried nuts called "malkana" including kernels of almonds, walnuts, pistachio and filbert, kernels of peach and apricot bones and nuts of conifer trees. The garden was blossoming and smelt nice by divine fragrance. Temur with a scientist Hoja Afzal and an erudite person Maud ibn Umar Taftazoni were hiding in the secluded pavilion of the garden. There was also a calligrapher from Bagbana, Mansur ibn Muhammad. In their easy conversation they talk about history, poetry, philosophy, religion and calligraphy. Each had his own point of view and world outlook. The young men spoke a lot about state organization. Regarding this issue the opinion was unanimous - the provinces should unite. Khorazmshokh Muhammad Aladdin managed to make his kingdom powerful, indeed. Its borders spread from the deserts of Khorazm to Persia. It was his fault that he was not able to keep the power in his hands and became under bad luck. But during his reign all the internal conflicts have almost stopped. There was one aim - unity in one integral powerful state. Even small nationalities collect the tribes bit by bit, by patrimonial kins, principdoms, keeping the way of life, traditions, customs and create their states. Let's consider the Bulgars at the end of the seventh century... Downstream Danube river to the north of the Balkan ridge the Bulgar Empire was founded. The Kiev Russia in the 9th century and the Polish principdom in the 10th century were united also.

- O-ol - The young men exclaimed summarizing - Here is the state with its own governing framework, with its army. And in our country at the moment only struggle for getting power and feuds are observed.

The scientist Hoja Afzal has croaked indignantly:

- They speak about Moslems cruelty while Charles the Great in struggle with Saxons executed four and a half thousand people, and the knights at crusades poured the blood of many thousands Moslems and Catholics. Or remember the plague which raged in 1348. The Jews were accused for this tragedy, and valorous knights killed innocent people all over the Europe for this reason.

After Hoja Afzal's indignation a pause came. Then Mansur Muhamma-di spoke:

- In the fall of the same year in memory of the end of a plague the Romans following their vow given to The Virgin Mary built the high marble ladder leading to the church of The Virgin Mary on Capitol Hill.

Taftazoni continued the idea of Hoja Afzal:

- When the legate was asked how to distinguish heretics from the real Catholics the response was: "Kill everyone at once. God himself recognizes the righteous ones".

Temur uttered thoughtfully:

- I think that the cruelty should not be blind but be fair and demonstrative. If you break the law, a pledge or the promise - then the response should follow.

After sweet pies, conversation on libraries commenced. They appraised Bukhara, Nishapur and the Rhine bookstores.

- And the Baghdad library is called "the Treasury of wisdom", - Mansur Muhammadi told almost with a challenge.

- You are right, - Taftazoni gesticulating with hands, joined the discussion excitedly. - Besides, in Baghdad and Damascus observatories were created, and astrologists use sophisticated tools, they have managed to calculate approximately the dimensions of the Earth and described the arrangement of visible stars on the sky.

Temur smiled surprisingly:

- Against Koran?

- Nevertheless, if somebody starts his way for the sake of science, then doors of paradise are opened to him, - Hoja Afzal said.

Salma with her dress rustling, together with her fiance Sarradj came up to pavilion. The girl smiled and asked:

- Aren't my guests tired of innermost talks? The wine is waiting, the maids are dancing attractively.

The bride and bridegroom went away.

- What a nice girl! - Hoja Afzal clicked his tongue. - Temur, how could you miss such a pretty girl?

Temur, smiled to himself, and pronounced calmly:

- Oh, yes...I missed...

A painter and calligrapher Mansura ibn Mukhammadi exclaimed:

- The face of princess! The wonder of the nature! I could gladly paint her.

- I can't understand, why Islam forbids depicting of living creatures on the canvas. - Taftazoni interrupted the calligrapher.

Hoja Afzal answered instead of painter:

- This commandment is written in the sura of Koran. It is said there that representation of human beings and create idols are the devil's work. And also we can read in the hadis* of Muhammad: "Calamity will come to a person who portrays living creatures". In the Judgment Day, the people whose faces were drawn by painter, come out from the pictures and demand him to give them their soul back. But the painter is a man only, he can not give their souls back, and because of this he should be burnt in the eternal fire".

- But franks make portraits both of their kings and ordinary people, - Temur interfered. - The Islam is not against any artists, that strict prohibition appeared in order to delete idolatry and worship of icons, as our tribes worshiped idols, sculptures and rock paintings. That is why the clergy decided that depiction of human beings is considered as a sin. In the result of this the efforts of the artists were directed to depiction of flora, as well as to the calligraphic presentation of God's word. It's enough to open the sacred Koran to see the mastership of the calligraphers. Despite the prohibition the amazing samples of tiny painting were created and, furthermore, the miniatures representing the prophet: were created - some-

times he was depicted with a hazy veil on the face and more often - with the open face and a nimbus as the tongues of flame. Moslem saints and he Almighty's associates were drawn as well.

- Are there any schools? - Hoja Afzal asked with interest.

Mansur ibn Muhammadi joined the conversation:

- There are many of them. The Baghdad schools are created for development of fine painting of Caliphate. Workshops of Tebriz School are very picturesque.

Temur has raised slowly, his eyes shone. He uttered pensively:

- By the God will when we construct magnificent palaces we shall introduce there the rank of an artist. The artists will memorize our time with their art. Mansurjan, sometime later you will open school of fine painting in Kesh or Samarkand. And I shall collect such a library, that the whole world will be amazed.

The artist-calligrapher looked at young Amir gratefully, he was eager to tell about his ideas, sketches. Hoja Afzal had risen and said regretfully:

- My dear friends, we should go to the guests. It seems that the hostess is discontented with our disappearance.

- Our life resembles the life of nomads - today we are in Herat, tomorrow - in Samarkand, who knows when we meet us again, - Taftazoni said with a note of doubt.

Temur raised both hands.

- We shall meet. Allah's will is for everything! And let our aspirations will be embodied in strengthening of our state Turan.

In the city and its outskirts it became quiet. And Temur had started preparations for his way back. Salma didn't reproach Bekk, but he saw that she was suffering. Their last rendezvous in a garden, among beautiful roses was clear and sad. The girl casted down her eyes and whispered:

*Love blinds and burns stronger than fire,
And only handful of ash is left after me.
But if you even cut the root of love -
Anyhow, the sprouts will grow out of the stub.*

Temur glanced at beloved girl with farewell sight and answered:

*Some people are afraid of tortures and the others like them
Some people like balsam and others like to be tortured,
And I like the things which my beloved girl likes.
I accept the joy of date as well as a pain of parting.*

Late at night, Temur's detachment left Herat. Salma was in her bedroom hoping for a miracle - she imagined that Temur comes riding the white horse and sweeps away all handicaps, enters her bedroom and takes her away to the world's end. But when the last horse of kaum passed away the Heratian girl moaned of unbearable spiritual pain in an anxious silence of night. Then she suddenly laughed bitterly and whispered angrily: "You will never know about your son".

The road, crossing the area of Balo-Murgab passed through the gloomy ravine. After it the road was upward along the bank of the Murgab River. Then, their route led twisting to the one of Murgab's valley and through the ridge Turbendi lead to the dirty Kora-Jangal river. At last, passing Kala-Beli it went straight as the flight of arrow to Talkan mountain. From here, all ways led to Balkh.

The group of Urkad-Futabaf could do nothing but pass through that gloomy ravine in Balo-Murgab, and Temur decided to make a trap at the narrowest place of ravine. Temur's djigits, closing the ways of exit and entrance organized a trap. The group gathered by Urkad-Futabaf in a hurry in one of Herat's bazaar's made no resistance. The quicker defenders of the caravan were shot like mountain goats by navkars of the young Bekk. The group of people being close to Urkad-Futabaf tried to escape and was beaten by stones by Temur's slaves. Bekk selected craftsmen and workmen among the imprisoned; and the rest ones were found by his friends. The booty was also abundant. Besides gold, there was a great deal of sacks with sweets and expensive fruits: dates, raisins, honey, nuts, sugar... After scared cries and endless moans there became a dead silence. Only the howl of the

wounded camel was heard. It was shot by Temur's navkars. But suddenly loud screams and cries in bad Turkic were heard:

- Do not dare to touch me! Where is your leader?

Temur, inspecting the captured plunder and heard women's voices, asked being irritated:

- What is happened? Who is she?

A run up slave answered willingly:

- A captured girl... red-haired...crying...

An angry woman appeared before Temur: Her green eyes were full of hatred; her red hair was tousled over her shoulders. Temur smiled severely - she looked like tigress. The woman strained like a bow ready to shoot and blurted out:

- I am - Zlatislava, the first wife of qozi-kalon - the supreme judge of the city of Balkh. My spouse Hoja Allaidin will kill everyone... if you do not let me and my suite go away.

The tigress has thrown up her hands with a dagger, but Bekk prevented the blow having grasped her wrist quickly. And being amazed with crazy braveness of the captive he exclaimed smiling.

- Guriya, you better come down from the heavens, here - I am your master, - he said and embraced her and kissed the red-haired beauty.

Having seen grinning faces of Zlatislava's suite he noticed mildly:

- And the retinue does not love their tigress...

Curling like a snake trying to tear herself away from his embrace she bit the hand of boshbegi up to blood.

With the cruel smile Temur has shouted to the retinue of Zlatislava:

- Your tigress looks like the torn hen. For her insulting me this woman should be killed. If you like to stay alive - spit on her.

And the court began to spit zealously to their mistress, and some of them for pleasing young Bekk - spat even several times. Dirty jokes were heard also.

Zlatislava with disgusted contempt looked at her court, which recently used to catch every of her words, and was happy even trying to catch her eye. The character of their mistress was really unbridled but she had never done

any harm to her subordinates. How unreliable and cowardly the people are; they are ready for any meanness, dragging their dignity to the mud to save own life. But she trusted them. The mistress has taken her hair from the forehead aside and looked at everyone. Straightening her head, she cried scornly:

- I was taken by force, and I fought for my honour. You are cowardly jackals, - and she turned to Temur, - Cut off my head, let my eyes not see that shame.

Temur touched his breast scratched with the sharp nails of the passionate woman and said:

- Be ready for death, tigress, let your eyes see the dawn.

Suddenly Temur took mistress's hand and kissed gently. Then he raised the sword, but his face expressed the same mocking. Zlatislava bowed her head. A swift strike of the sword and a head of the slave rolled up to the mistress foot.

- You are rotten hyenas, you can not defend your mistress! - Bekk cried furiously. - He ordered to give the lady back all things which were taken away and to kill the traitors.

The woman pressed her white hands to the breast and glanced at Temur with surprise.

- How did you appear at Urkad-Futabaf's squad? Who are you? - Temur asked. - Your name sounds like Slavic.

- I am Serbian. My family escaping from Turkish yoke moved to Damask where our relatives lived. We were poor. Once Hoja Olovuddin came to Damask on business and saw me. Engaged... He paid a lot of bride-money... Oh, that old man turned me to the old jade which was stagnating in the stall. And, right now, only with you I have realized that I am really a tigress. Thank you, warrior. What is your name?

- I'm Temur.

- I want you to remember me forever - and Zlatislava gave him her family ring.

- My name is engraved there. If you come with a note to my relatives, they will always help you. Farewell, Bekk...

At last Balkh appeared in front of them. The squad, having set spurs to horses, with whooping and cheerful shouts has rushed into city. Crossing along the streets of Jewish mahalla and the Indian quarter, they stopped in an old caravanserai. Temur strengthened his squad with guloms and navkars and has sent an expensive cargo to home. And he himself with friends has decided to stay in Balkh - to visit Ingu-Temur. They have drunk for the first victory and for the future feats. And in one of his drunken nights a crazy idea came to his mind - to see cloudland India. The djigits, who have forgotten what sobriety was and joined the boshbegi with pleasure. Next day many of them did not remember the night dreams anymore but not Temur. From the very morning he began to explain his plan of the preparation to India - nobody dared to object him.

Ingu-Temur invited to the council his friend amir Akbugu - the young man with courageous, as if cut of a granite stone face. His eyes under swollen eyelids looked strictly and attentively. Temur looked searchingly at the young Amir, asked:

- Is it not shameful to go for a campaign, amir?

- And what is to be ashamed about? - Akbuga answered unperturbedly.
- If Kazagon khan with his sons and grandsons are plundering the area of Herat and neighbouring territories for replenishing his treasury why then we, the poor amirs, can not fill our empty trunks in another area? I think, it is not so important whether to attack a city, settlement, a caravan or alien country. Now is the time when the winners are those who are stronger and rob the less strong ones. After barbarous raid my province was divided in two parts by Hussein, the grandson of khan Kazagon and by Ul'dja-buka Sulduzi, the head of the powerful tribe Sul'duzi - to ease the plunder. And all caravans which I sent to the overseas countries were grasped by Kei-histrou Huttolani. And now kin Akbuga which was mighty in former time lives in povetry, - and the lips of Amir twisted in bitter sneer. - Once the army of my family included ten thousand of armed navkars; now only twenty-five are with me, and they are almost starving. So, I am ready to go under your banner.

Temur looked at the brightened eyes of Akbuga and said with steel in his voice:

- Amir, I'd not like to offend you but I must warn you: I require an iron discipline of those who are in my army.

- Bekk, do not trouble yourself by instructions, if I see any discontent from your side, then I reject my share and go away, - Akbuga answered with dignity.

Temur slapped on his back friendly.

- I think that it will be no need in this...

Temur also liked the other djigits - Zinda Chashma, Tung and Tikshi. Strong, burnt by the sun and wind-tanned faces they resembled each other in some way. Warriors agreed willingly to go to for the next trip. Each of them promised to bring ten warriors to Temur's. So, the squad was formed, and there were much more navkars* attracted by a dim dream then Temur thought.

It was more difficult to find a good guide. - They talked with a lot of them, but each time boshbegi wrinkled and nodded his face being unsatisfied. At last, once, Akbuga brought a lean balkhi, Kubai by name. Temur looked at the Amir distrustfully, and the latter raised his hand as showing that there was no need to worry and pushed the lean balkhi to the Bekk slightly. The wrinkled face of the balkhi was not attractive; a dirty skullcap covered his head. His eyes were looking watchfully. The young Bekk, looking at Akbuga with discontent asked the balkhi:

- Can you describe me the route to India?

Balkhi has taken a torn map, laid it and and with his thin fingers began to show the route slowly:

- It is possible to reach India from Balkh using several ways, and almost all of them run through the valley of the river Hulm, which, like the Balkhab, takes its origin in Gindukush mountains and it does not reach Amu Daryo river.

- How many days we need to reach Hulm river from Balkh? - Bekk asked, looking at the map with interest.

- It takes two days, - lean man answered and added, - a lot of snakes live in that place. There is a grave of Saint Ali, and the legend about his fight with the snakes exists. From Hulm the way leads to the narrow ravine. The rocks are merged so closely, that there is hardly a place for a path and small river; in one of the places the ravine is so narrowed, that the caravan of camels can hardly pass through it.

- Mark this place with pencil, - Temur requested silently.

The lean, having lifted colorless eyebrows, nodded understandingly and made a mark on the map. After the little pause Kubai continued:

- From Hulm up to Semingan the wide valley is stretched. In Semingan the strongly fortified fortress Heibak is located. The neighboring lands are fertile and famous for their abundant gardens - Drumming with his thin fingers on the map, Kubay emphasized softly: - In these territories the people are friendly and trustful. And they accepted all religions like a sponge. There are many monuments of Buddhism, even the Russian Orthodox Church.

Temur began to like that man gradually as he remembered an important details and he knew his business very well.

- From Semingan or, more correctly, from fortress Heibak the main road is directed to the east, through mountains, up to the city Baklan which is on the river Ak-Sarai.

- And what is the distance? - Sayfiddin asked screwing up his eyes. - It is also about two days by foot; - the guide answered hoarsely and licked his dried lips.

Temur has clicked fingers and showed a sign to give some tea. Abbos has offered a cup of green tea obligingly to the guy. The lean man, looking at the map, drank a little bit, and his protruding Adam's apple moved back and forward while swallowing. Kubai thanked for tea with a nod of his head and continued with map.

- From Baklan in three days we achieve Anderab which is located just near the main ridge of Hindu Kush, then the blazed footpath leads down to the Indus river basin, to the valley of Bendjhir river through Havak mountain pass, and there the ruins of the fortress Havak are.

- Mark this, too, - boshbegi requested.

- All right, - the guide answered shortly. - In the oasis of Bendjhir there are cities of Garjab and Pervan. - Then, he added unloudly: These places are known for the coinage.

- What? What? - Khudaidad at once awoke after dozing suddenly. - Repeat, what you have said.

Kubai touched his chin and answered clearly: - the area of inflow of the river Gurbend to Bendjhir is abundant of silver mines. - Yes, yes, I heard that Pervan is one of the main places of the silver coinage, - Ingu-Temur confirmed.

The heroes of Balkh - Zinda Chashma, Tung, Tikshi - nodded their heads - all these facts were true as the lean man presented.

The road from Pervan leads to two directions. One of them leads to the south through Charic and Istalif to the Kabul valley. Another one leads to the south-east upwards Gurbend to Bamnan.

Temur looked at Akbuga with satisfaction and he smiled in response. Kubai continued his speech without stopping wishing to tell everything he knew.

- There is also another way to Bamnan - it is upper Kheibaka citadel. The road is very narrow and there are places where only the goat passes can be used. And very difficult passage is through the mountain passes of which Akrobat is the most difficult to pass.

Temur asked if there was a possibility to get to valley Khulm imperceptibly.

Kubay answered with hesitation:

- Yes, it is possible. There are secret passes but they all are dangerous. One of them passes along Balkhabu river and reaches almost its mouth. He mentioned that those places were very beautiful. The river near Bend-Emir place is crossed with the natural rock-like dams, and six lakes formed there are full of unusual fish. Those places are regarded as holly ones.

- Suleiman stopped the story-teller:

- Dear, you deviated of the main subject.

The guide continued: .

- It is possible to get down from mountains to Khulm valley via the goat passes.

He became silent. Temur had a cup of tea and asked the guide teasing:
- Would you like to join me in our campaign?

- Certainly, - he answered. - I can show you the ways unknown to anybody. I have very old maps and I visited many places of Turon, Mazendaron and Iran.

Temur approached the window and saw the gardener who picked heavy grape bunches to a big basket skilfully. Bashbegi informed the map-interpreter that he takes him to their detachment and asked if they also could reach Badakhshan and its rubby and lapis lazuli mines imperceptibly.

The guide was very glad and whispered with gratitude:

- Thank you, Bekk for your trust. There is a way from Balkh to Badakhshan via Khulk valley which leads to big Talkan city. It takes six day. He looked at the map and mentioned that there is also very beautiful Varvaliz city on the way in a very green valley of Ak-Saroy.

Bahadur Tung suddenly joined the discussion and asked mockingly:

- And how to get from Ak-Saroy to Kunduz? - And stared to the guide grinningly.

Djigits looked at Kubai with worry feeling sympathy to him. He slightly closed his eyes and told recollecting:

- First the twisting road leads to Anderab, and from there through Hindu Kush to Kunduz.

Pahlavon Tung only has made a helpless gesture:

- It is correct, - and has explained: - I am from these places and that's why I asked...

The guide not being offended at all for such testing was ready for the further explanations.

Temur has appreciated the guide worthily. Kubai was the real finding. Allah himself presented that guide to Temur.

In some days the squad of Temur went through the tiger paths on the next roadstead.

Two attacks on the groups accompanying caravan failed. The chief of the first kaum managed to organize defense skillfully. The repulse was so resolute that Temur did not test the destiny led the confused djigits to the

mountains. At attack on the second group ended almost tragically but they avoided a trap. The fast horses have rescued them. But losses were - their scouts went west.

During several days Temur was gloomy and concentrated. The result of those gloomy reflections was the decision to develop the plan of an attack more carefully. And the new guide helped him in this. And good luck came back again. The first ambush arranged on the road leading from Hulm directly to the gorge has brought a victory and swags.

The caravan was loaded with bales of tea, gunpowder and silks. The swag was rich. But the rejoicing of the victory was darkened by the death of the sarhang's spouse. Having seen, that her husband was bravely fighting for his wealth and dignity of his wife, he fell down being pierced with a spear. The woman with mad and heart-breaking voice shouted: "Dada-si, dadasi!", gripped a dagger and killed herself. Temur was shaken by this. He wanted to be a soldier, he wanted to battle with such brave men but not with women.

- Bury them following the Moslem customs, - boshbegi ordered. - They deserved it.

Bekk lifted the belt of sarhang from the ground; probably it was fallen down from him during the battle and touched it. His fingers sensed something firm - in the next minute the emeralds of amazing beauty were on his palm.

- So, Allah rewarded us, - boshbegi exclaimed sadly and put the precious stones to the pouch and as if weighing it on his hand, threw it to Khudaidad: - It goes to the lump swag and should be divided equally among all djigits.

Friends remonstrated, even gloomy Akbuga was indignant.

- Boshbegi, it is your swag, it was your victory

Temur flashed by his eyes and enounced angrily:

- Remember forever - all the time we will divide the swad equally.

Akbuga only shook his head.

- Amir Hussein, the grandson of Amir Kazagon, could leave these emeralds to himself and nobody dared to say a word about sharing the swag. But you, boshbegi, demonstrated the nobility, - and Amir Akbuga

embraced Temur with excitement. - Henceforth and forever we are under your gonfalon.

A smile lit up a stern face of young Bekk.

- Venerable Amir, do not exagurate - all our battles are afore yet.

The little town Hendjon, situated to the west from Anderub was on the crossroads of the main trade ways leading from Balkh to India through Hulm and Semington. There was a customs house in that mountain village, where angry customs officials collected customs taxes. Caravans usually used to go through the pass Havak situated about seven farsahs to the east from Hendjon. From this border town to the pass through Gindukush only one passage was, and then a fairy country India emerged.

Having reached the north of India, the travelers stopped in Kuna-udja, where the merchants selling sugar bought herd of foals for a very high price at once.

The friends of Temur were familiarizing with great interest with a country they heard so much about.

There was a good climate providing for picking crops twice a year: in autumn and spring, but some irrigated lands gave crops thrice. Millet, rice, wheat, barley, cotton, different types of beans, sugar-cane were planted on the fields. India exported cotton cloths, Bengal silks and arms, golden, silver and copper jewelries. The goods were carried on elephants' back led by teamsters. Along the blazed trail entering the Great Silk Road the caravans moved constantly from that unbelievably rich country.

The kaum of Temur several times met the strong Indian patrol squads and not testing its destiny it moved to the pass Havak. And in the ruins of an old fortress Bekk decided to stop for resting with his djigits. And the warriors of Akbuga have advised to sit in a shelter and not to fool about on roads. He warned his countryman that the furious crowd of slaves, who run away from the Bendjhir's silver mine was tramping on mountain tracks. The fugitive slaves had already plundered a caravan with silver coins near the city of Pervan. With other caravan they did more cruelly - they had brutally clobbered the guard, then cut off their heads and threw them to dogs. The fiend settled down in souls of slaves-hyenas, so it was safer to wait.

Madam Nushafarin - the sweet-born, as her husband called, together with her brother's wife Kamila went to the settlement "Old platan tree" to arrange a match for her nephew. Amila, the daughter of the tax-collector was once in Anderab with relatives - the neighbours of Nushafarin - and impressed her very much. Mother of the nephew, Kamila, was against a bride from a province, but Nushafarin was not only the sweet-born, but also the sweet-voiced. She has managed to convince all that they could not find a bride for the nephew better than Amila was. Time was not quiet and peaceful, it was robbery on the roads, and the cortege of matchmakers has decided to join one of the caravans to get quite good protection. On the dawn the caravan left Anderab and moved towards India. Nushafarin planned to arrive to "Old platan tree" village by the evening.

After passing through a very steep slope, the caravan has stopped for relaxation. The cameleers have quickly unloaded camels as they needed a good rest as well. The guard organized patrols and put the arms aside. It seemed that the locality was uninhabited, safe, and that it was possible to snooze before getting hot food.

Nobody of the group has seen reckless djigits; they appeared invisibly as having percolated through the rocks. Several soldiers of the guard started fighting and were killed at once by the arrows of the skilled archers. Nushafarin has almost lost gift of speech - all incidents seemed like a terrible dream. All her terrified relatives and servants crowed together under branchy old tree. Kamila has fainted. Nushafarin began to think rashly. It is her fault that they started for a trip. Neither relatives, nor Kamila never forgive her idea to go to "Old plane tree" village. Her thought worked feverishly - it was crucially necessary to do something, to save the situation as it were. And suddenly she realized something... She took a precious ring off and having seized a hand of a speckled navkar whispered with excitement:

- This ring is your loot. Tell me only two words for my rescue. What is the name of your leader and the name of his father or mother, and the most important is where did he come from?

The djigit, holding a ring in hand and feeling that the gift is priceless whispered:

- His name Temur, the name of his father is Taragay, - and the soldier has turned back quickly and disappeared in commotion.

All captives gathered near the old elm tree. When Kamila came to herself she looked at Nushafarin with hatred. But madam did not have time for Kamila. She silently looked how the deft djigits quickly reloaded the goods from camels to horses. The string of horse carts was at last on the mountain path while the camels were prepared to whip up back to Anderab. The lean guide walked over the camp as a host. Madam with hatred has spat to his back. Then she began to look for boshbegi. Her sight stopped on the handsome djigit, to whom many guloms applied. But Nushafarin decided that that man was not boshbegi and continued to watch that handsome man. Then a young djigit with two bodyguards came out of the hastily installed tent. The handsome man has approached to him and addressed with great respect. And in general at once it was felt that navkars, servants, soldiers began to run faster and to work with better organization. And she recognized at once that that man was boshbegi. She prayed inside for his not coming back to the tent. She had not any doubt that he was Temur. The handsome young man said something to boshbegi, and exchanging words they approached the group of captives. Nushafarin involuntarily heard a snatch of their conversation.

- Sayfiddin, the seized soldiers promised the redemption. Other captives should be sent to bekks and amirs. They will find a way to get a lot of gold from their relatives.

Nushafarin pressed her hands to the breast, closed eyes being afraid and with shivering voice appealed:

- Bekk, honorable Amir Temur!

She didn't understand what the answer was but when she opened her eyes she saw the eyes of Kamila full of fear and heard despairing cries of her relatives - they decided that after this addressing all of them will be killed.

- I listen to you, madam; - Temur looked at her with curiosity.

Nushafarin was encouraged and uttered with shivering voice:

- Dear Bekk Temurjon, how are Amir Taragay and his precious spouse? Once I with my father visited your country, and we were invited to your

hospitable house. You were very small that time. But I have recognized you.
- And Nushafarin have squeezed out the pale smile on her face. - I am very glad to meet you.

The severe face of boshbegi's became liven up, eyes were kind and young Bekk asked politely:

- What do you want, madam?

Nushafarin has bowed down, but felt burning glances of her relatives with her back and overcoming fear, whispered: - can we go to your tent?...

Temur, having exchanged glances with Sayfiddin, not hiding surprise, has let the brave woman go into his modest dwelling.

- Well, what are your secrets? - This young, beautiful woman made him curious. Nushafarin stretched her hands towards him.

- Dear Bekk, I'm not alone in your captivity, there are many relatives with me who spitefully turned against me. I involved them to this campaign and we went with good intentions, prepared for a wedding. There are expensive gifts in my cart. They are yours. Only don't kill us...

- The woman has burst out crying and sat on a felt carpet weakly. Temur came nearer and helped Nushafarin to stand up.

- You have recollected my father's name; it is enough to release you and your companions, my beauty... I don't need gifts. But I request you about one thing: never and nowhere mention my name anymore. My navkars will not let people who know my name go from captivity...

When boshbegi and Nushafarin came to the relatives who were standing close to each other, the woman told in a loud voice deliberately:

- Our young Bekk is in a state of belligerency with our region. It is bloody feud... - And boshbegi spread his hands guiltily. - But having found out about our arranging a match, the djigit-knight gives us two young camels back, adds the bull and also returns all wedding things and gifts to my beloved sister-in-law Kamila and a cart with magnificent trotters.

The captives began to make preparations joyfully and guloms have looked at boshbegi confusingly. And he lashed a top of his boot with a whip and shouted:

- Immediately fulfill the order of madam.

When Nushafarin with the navkars of Temur went further, boshbegi called for the speckled soldier.

- Was she that woman? The speckled man nodded.

- Dear Bekk, that woman asked about you and your family. Temur burst out laughing delightfully:

- She was playing with fire! Khudaidad noticed gloomily:

- You shouldn't have let her go, Bekk! She knows your name.

The speckled man was ready to stop her and said:

- It is not late yet; she won't escape from me...

Temur shook his head thoughtfully:

- No, the woman like she won't betray. - He took the madam's ring, admired a blue stone. Then he stretched it to the speckled soldier. - I return your swag.

The soldier, looking into the eyes of boshbegi faithfully uttered:

- Dear Bkk, accept it, please...

Temur shook his head:

- Madam has given a ring to you for saving her life. And you have done your duty honestly.

The squad of Temur ran into with the slaves who had run away from mine in one of the secret mountain paths. The slaves were many and they stuck round the squad of boshbegi like a locust. But Temur due to the well-arranged and resolute actions organized such a furious repulse that soon his squad started the attack. The rebellions fought desperately realizing that there was no way back and that death was waiting for them everywhere. But forces were unequal. What could the exhausted slaves with their sticks do against the well-armed warriors? Almost all of them died. Boshbegi missed thirteen guloms, not including the wounded ones. Jaguy Barloss interrogated four survived slaves, all of them were wounded, and one of them who could not bear the tortures informed where swags were hidden. The treasure was enormous - there were five sacks with silver coins. The whole day was spent on sharing the money among soldiers. And it seemed that all of them were satisfied.

Chapter XIII



UNEXPECTED DANGER

An evening haze, from time to time dispelled by dull torches, calmly fell over the town. Barefooted kids gathered autumn leaves and burned them. Bluish mysterious smoke was wrapping clay-built houses, making them similar to fabulous palaces.

Smoke was permeating into the houses and brought the odor of the passed summer and unconcerned childhood into.

Shamsiddin Kulol with Mullah Kamoliddin, Hoja Rauntangan, Fakhnavi, Keldibobo, Aziz - bricklayer and his favourite - Abboskozi went in direction of Sufi's order to Naqshbandi. Guests were met by a handsome and well-shaped boy - murid Majid. Having heard the name of the imam, he nodded silently and led guests through a maze of taki - to a hostel of Sufis which was a big quadrangle yard encircled by high walls. Along one of them the cells - khujras were built where murids and students who studied religious subjects lived. On the west side of the yard, there was a mosque of sheikh Nakshbandi. Passing through the room for public praying the mullah slowed down his pace and Abboskozi, walking behind almost pushed down his teacher. Imam turned back to his friends and put his finger on

lips. An amazing picture opened to the pilgrims' glance: crowd of dervishes gathered in a circle and swun in the trance. Their bodies were twisting as a snake, the others were twisting in the circle, the eyes of Sufi brothers were closed, lips were shut tightly, God's name was uttered not by tongue, but by heart; the hands of dervishes were crossed on the chest and a head bent to the heart.

Majid suddenly became worried and hastened as sheikh did not like to wait.

Shamsiddin Kulol walking behind Majid along the dim hall knew that some dervishes pronounce the name of God in their prayers with cries, noise, grimaces, dances; that was something like zeal. The others uttered God's name in silence, interrupted from time to time by loud, sudden exclamations, some of them gathered in a circle, the others set in line and didn't even pray, but renounced from everything.

Sheikh Nakshbandi hosted his guests in a big hall, brightly lightened by torches; the floor was covered by thick mats. Fakhnavi at once paid his attention to the saint book Koran in an old cherry-color binding that was distinguished among the other manuscripts. Small minbar* at which sheikh was sitting was a high tribune with a wooden awning and a symmetric ladder faced at the prayers' side.

Minbar was decorated skillfully, incrustated with precious kinds of wood. Imam rose up the exquisite ladder and they hug and kissed with sheikh exclaiming:

- Thanks God, who gave me the chance to see you healthy and safe again.

Nakshbandi ordered to accompany the friends of saint father's friends to a cell and gave instructions about dinner to a silent dervish who was waiting at the doors and added that the quests should have good meals. When everybody left, sheikh smiling warmly, asked:

- Wise Hokim, what news did you bring to our shelter?

- I brought different news: good and bad, - Shamsiddin Kulol began intriguing. - I do not know, what to begin with... The last khan of Genghis Kazan perished in a battle with Kazagon, and the state governanace

in Maverannahr passed to a head of our tribe and kin. So not to tease the Mongols, Kazagon didn't declare himself as a khan, limited himself by title of an amir, and coinage there is made by the name of "false" khan Donishmandch.

Nakshbandi politely interrupted him and asked servants about dinner. Imam negatively shook his head:

- My stomach needs night rest. So...Kazagon spends winter in Sali-Saroy, - Imam continued, - in summer he goes to Khutalyan near Kay-husrav. And he secretly prepares actions against the local governor for a long time. Kazagon thinks only of raids, and furthermore, beks and clergy headed by Ubaydullo have instigated him, they all are interested in their own enriching. Amir Kazagon with his young militant grandson Hussein makes preparations for invading Herat's region.

Sheikh set imperceptibly his snow-white dressing gown in order, straightened and asked about Hussein with interest.

Shamsiddin Kulol answered after thinking for a moment:

- He is big-headed, greedy, and brutal but he is a real warrior and people are afraid of him. It is possible that his grandfather can pass him the ruling of Balkh, and it is evident that he is an explicit heir of the throne of Maverannahr, - and breathing heavily, imam said: - We all expected that all regions would join and there'll be one powerful kingdom of Moslems. - And he added more regretfully: - Neither cathedrals, nor mosques, madrasahs, schools nor hospitals were built. And there are no good baths even, - he ended tiredly.

Sheikh listened to the interlocutor quietly and asked the question again:

- And what about Hoja Barloss, the governor of Kesh?

- That weak-willed man was attracted with secular entertainments - a saint father noticed distressingly. - He is out of prudence and is fully obeying to Ubaydullo and "dances under his whistle." Only owing to Taragay and more - to his son Temur we were able to rescue Ali Bahodir.

- Yes, he told me about this, - sheikh smiled mildly. - This djigit will contribute to the benefit of Maverannahr.

- Not put the evil eye, - Imam said angrily. - Spies of Vakhid are still in search for Ali Bahodir-liberator. Ubaydullo could not settle down as he thought that the dervish knew the secrets of Bukhara's order, and if he got that information from him it was a chance to get a good deal of money. Having remembered something, Imam said expressively: - Prepare your groom Dovud for marriage. Taragay agreed.

- Thank you, saint father, that you had taken my request into account - and sheikh, having changed the theme of the talk, started speak about Khorezm's rulers with anxiety: they carried out an aggressive politics against Bukhara and are in a deal and agreement with steppe Mongols, they pillage frontier settlements causing the feuds everywhere...

Quietly, trying not to disturb the conversation Imam's companions entered the room and sat near the wall noiselessly.

Hoja Rauntangan said carefully:

- Great sheikh, we were sent to sleep but we didn't go. It is of great honour for us to be with you, and that's why we request you to forgive us for coming without invitation. I think that God would excuse us for our intervening.

Sheikh looked at everyone with a long, pensive gaze.

- I am all for your attention, - and with these words sheikh looked at pilgrims and exchanged glances with Shamsiddin Kulol.

Keldibobo had risen hardly from a thick mat, clumsily rubbing his ill legs, asked timidly:

- Hazrat, can you please, tell us about the main commandments of your pupils?

- Why not, God's man? Our main commandment is God's fear, - sheikh smiled gently. - The human beings should not love or hate anybody as these feelings divert people from their duties regarding servicing God. The heart of devoted Moslem belongs only to God. You should be satisfied with the destiny which the Creator predetermined for us and accept that everything is initiated by God.

Fakhnavi put his hands on his chest, bowed and asked:

- Guru, suppose, I am your apprentice. What does a murid follow in his actions? How far does your power spread over him?

- In all his acts murid as an apprentice should follow sheikhs' orders, - Nakshbandi said strictly - it does not matter if it concerns the religion or everyday life: eating, drinking. Murid should consider his guru as the only one in the world and as the most important mentor. The power of sheikh over murids is enormous. The leader of the order was always a master of murids' soul. And they always have proclaimed that disciple should be in the hands of sheikh like a corpse in the hands of washers of dead. - Sheikh raised his voice. - And if you were my disciple, you would be dead long ago, because you interfered into our talk without my knowledge and my consent but as you are my guests and arrived with my friend Shamsiddin Kulol I forgive you and say good-bye to you...

He embraced pilgrims, bowing and faltering on each other moved backwards and went out of the hall.

- Wasn't it too rough? - Imam asked surprisingly. We go together for a long way.

- No, my dear, that's what I need. They should know that if something happens to you then I and anger of God punish them. Though, it is doubtful whether this fear will really stop the hand of defiler, but it is important to realize that the warning is accepted and they are inspired with God's fear. Somebody who sent them here is interested in our talks, indeed.

Saint father calmed down and told the sheikh about the request of merchant Grigorii about possibility to find the book "Armenia" and about the ransom of girths and saddles from the city prison.

Sheikh thought for a while and assured his guest:

- Do not worry about this; everything will be delivered to the merchant. By the way, I just remembered: a young confessor from Andkhey lives in Mecca, his name is Baraka. If you'll have a chance, meet him. He is our man, from Maverannahr and being in foreign country, far from a fatherland you have chance to discuss a lot of things with him. And tomorrow go for sightseeing. I'll warn everybody about your coming to avoid any delays on your way. I'll give you one of my disciples - murid Majid as a guide. By the way, he is going to accompany you to Mecca, too, and I will wait for your safe coming back.

Ah, my dear Shamsiddin Kulol, time is running very fast! - And sheikh smiled thoughtfully. All the time you were Imam in Karshi, from there you made pilgrimage to Mecca. In Iraq you got into close relations with influential sheikhs, adopted their traditions and began to spread them in Maverannahr. In the beginning I accepted your new apprenticeship with hostility, - confessed the sheikh, - but then I understood that it was not against regulations of our Order. Nakshbandi touched the hand of Imam and said gratefully: - Our common teacher is Sayyid Amir Kulol. - Shamsiddin Kulol listened sheikh attentively and assented to him. - That's why, my honorable Imam, I do not only feel sympathy to you but you are also very dear to me. As you have a lot of evil-wishers, I do wish that you avoid all dangers on your way.

The eyes of a saint father moistened:

- Venerable, thank you for your care.

Sheikh shook his head:

- No, my dear, this worry about your trip is from the deep of my heart. That's why be careful. And soon you will come back to Karshi as Imam of the biggest mosque of the city. Just imagine that pupils are still coming to our order from you, or rather on behalf of you.

Shamsiddin Kulol suddenly looked up at him surprisingly:

- It's impossible, venerable sheikh. I haven't sent you anybody for the last months.

Naqshbandi answered being puzzled:

- No, as I remember, recently one pupil came from Nakhshab and referred to you.

Imam touched his sweaty forehead:

- Honorable Imam, if you do not mind, invite that novice, please.

When dervishes brought the pupil, Shamsiddin Kulol grew pale and raised his hand protestingly. He recognized that lop-eared youth who tried to kill him at once. Having sighed, he stared at a hateful face. He was undoubtedly that bastard who wanted to poison him during the lecture in madrasah. Novice, having seen Imam weakened and took his eyes off him in panic realizing the hopelessness of his situation. But suddenly he

straightened, his eyes were full of insolence and hatred, looking around as being persecuted, bitten his lip till blood and with distended nostrils cried out with a catch in his voice:

- I regret that my poison didn't hit the aim. Anyhow, my plan will be performed.

- His place is in Gehenna! - Sheikh said rigorously, - take him away. Your arrival to our abode, Imam, is a divine sign. You're saved our Fraternity from snakeish spy-creature. I hope that now you realize that your trip is not easy and very dangerous, - sheikh's voice became deep and melodious.

Shamsiddin Kulol came to himself, swallowed and said in a low voice:

- I am used to danger which accompanies me every day. - And added smiling brightly: - If I meet something vile, like this scoundrel, I immediately appeal to God: - Oh, God, no one but you can give happiness, all good things are initiated by You, evil won't disappear if you do not annihilate it; I don't have neither will, nor power - only God helps. And he, merciful, inspires me with divine knowledge.

Sheikh rose his nicely-shaped head up and said with a kind smile:

- You are going to start your trip on Thursday - the day which the brightest for trip. I'll request God for mercy, so that he supports you in faith. His blessing is for all your future and also for a fortunate pilgrimage and for your safe coming back.

Kind smile flashed by Imam's lips, he looked at sheikh thankfully and he said in a humble voice:

- I do accept your parting words with all my heart. And in your presence I apply to the Almighty. Oh, God, I am seeking for getting knowledge from you, resorting to your wisdom, to your power and grandeur: you are the omniscient, you know if my planned trip is beneficial for me and if it adds to strengthening of my faith, my piety. Oh, God, send me calmness and security in this trip. Having put his hands on a chest pryingly, imam applied to Nakshbandi: - Excuse me, if I burden you with my troubles.

- Saint father, you prepared for the way to Mecca, and pilgrimage is a sacred duty. You are a man, who is deeply convinced in the truth of

God's word, and I have a request to you. - Nakshbandi, making a pause, continued: - We have an amazing minaret Kalon. Whether the building of mosques and minarets starts this or next century or not - anyhow, our order has already started to collect money and the point is: many good masters were taken away from our town during the Mongol invasion. On our way you are going to meet them, - please, return those craftsmen back, promise them money, we'll build houses for them. During conversation you may refer to us, - sheikh took breath being excited. He had a manner to pass quickly to another subject without mentioning the first one any more. - Devout father, I want to protect you against the dangers on your way, that's why I want you to get know my people. Mongol's annihilated all our associates. But those followers who are alive carry out a covert war against Mongols for many years.

Shamsiddin Kulol glanced at him with surprise. Sheikh continued with imperturbable face:

- Don't wonder, Imam, they'll meet you in Baghdad, in the smith's block, in teahouse "Spring Wind." You should go to the teahouse keeper Mamed and give him this half- tenge with the words: "God is Almighty. Accept this coin as a dinar". He will bring you to our envoys, which will try to avert any danger threatening you.

- Oh, God, that's a bit too thick, - saint father uttered taking a half-coin. Always calm, never showing his emotions, Imam was astonished.

Sheikh nodded understandingly:

- We should be strong enough to fight with our sworn enemies - Mongols and to destroy that violation system. We are serving the same purpose. But I want to say another thing, - sheikh continued. - God is single in his power, and he is embodied in different realities as being dissolved in them. That's why you shouldn't strive so strongly for renunciation and asceticism but on the contrary you should enjoy all joys of life! It is so nice to listen to the competing of poets, to read fine poems, to listen to wonderful music, to admire fascinating dance of peri. - Shamsiddin Kulol even choked of surprise. Not paying attention to his friend, Nakshbandi continued to develop his thoughts further with inspiration.

- Saint father, we should develop science, our traditions, customs and the ways of everyday life.

- Forgive me; I am a God's servant. You wish me good luck for our trip. Then let God hear your pray as he excused us for our sins. Oh, the Most High, save and glorify the percepts of our Fraternity. And let God give health to the head of order, - and friends hugged each other with tears on parting

Passing by narrow passageways with his young guide Majid, Imam saw a crowd of prayers in a small yard.

Saint father looked at Majid tiredly:

- My dear pupil, show me to my cell.

In the morning, after the conversation with a representative of Khorezm Sufi order - Ibrahim Borzoi, saint father with his companions and guide Majid went to sightseeing. They visited mausoleum of Samoni which was built in 9th - 10th centuries: by the legend it was erected by Ismoil Samoni - the founder of Somonides state.

Travelers were amazed by massive walls of a building, on the top of which thin archs were constructed. Thick walls could protect the monument against destruction during centuries. Behind the arches, over the building there was a light-pervious gallery with small lancet windows. Such structure added to the tracery and resilience of the building and created divine lighting of the burial-vault interior. Even Shamsiddin Kulol who was there several times before gazed at the work of human creatin with great pleasure and idolatry.

Passing through the small streets of Bukhara the group came to a big square, where a magnificent Kalon minaret was. Minaret towered above the town in all its glory, as God's thumb. It seemed that its top sometimes touched the leaden clouds or stretched towards the clear blue sky - up to the foot of the God's throne as requesting him for the protection from fire, floods, earthquakes and invasions of enemies.

A robust moustached guard recognized Majid and ordered the warders to let them in. Pilgrims went upstairs by a narrow and steep spiral

ladder. Fakhnavi climbed up first and he counted one hundred and five steps; the others climbed up breathlessly. Guards with impassive faces met them without a word, watching with their eagle gaze the ways leading to the town.

With a bird's-eye view the panorama of town was as on a palm: small, toy-like houses, net of small canals pierced the town, fruit trees were creeping under in a fluffy-yellow feathering.

Only mullah Rauntangan was bad, he was at the tail-end and not feeling shy, sat breathing hardly, leaning against the wall. When Fakhnavi asked him if he wanted to go for sightseeing of fantastic town, mullah only waved his hand limply. Shamsiddin Kulol looked thankfully at Majid and, having breathed deeply, said:

- And now we approached one step closer to the Most High.

Just before leaving of caravan Shamsiddin Kulol decided to find the book of Abubakr Narshani "The history of Bukhara", which was very picturesquely depicted by the local mullah of Bukhara. Hoja Rauntangan volunteered to find the manuscript of a great historian. The whole group with saint father decided to go for a walk in a city. Walking around many parts of the town and having lost orientation embarrassed hoja at last has led the tired travelers to the eating-house in the suburbs of Bukhara where they decided to have some food. In the meanwhile hoja Rauntangan came to the one of the nearest cob houses for getting the book. Puny old man with a wrinkled face - the owner of the eating-house - met the guests friendly. He laid down new kurpachas on supa*, made fragrant tea and served noodle-soup. He wished bon appetite, and hushed naughty fifteen-year-old girl who was looking out of the window with curiosity. Then he shuffled away to his corner where on the one side of the table cups and kettles were and on another - hot bread was prepared.

Fakhnavi winked naughtily at a girl and poet Kamol, admiring the young creature laughed with delight. A girl, having snorted and jerked up her head, disappeared. Majid looked at Fakhnavi disapprovingly and Keldibobo shook his head showing his dislike of young men flirting. Only teacher Kamoliddin didn't pay attention to anybody and stoged his soup. Shamsiddin

Kulol ate just few spoons, put his dish aside and began to drink tea. But jaws of mason Aziz worked as millstones, eating food for two persons.

Suddenly the doors opened with a loud noise, and a gang of bearded brigands rushed into eating-room.

- Hey, owner, give us something tasteful to eat and a lot of vodka - their leader, pock-marked, with thick brows and short beard barked.

Digits, talking and laughing, set on the long benches at well-done tables. They didn't pay any attention at anyone in tearoom. The owner fussed with anxiety, serving food and drink for the new quests. Brigands did not put their shaggy, sheepskin caps off, almost all of them wore chekmen* of a dark-gray cloth, massive knives were jut out of belts. There were nine bandits in a gang. Brigands, roaring with laughter ate meat and drank vodka. Suddenly, having turned around, pock-marked saw a girl in a kitchen's doorway. Ringleader's eyes flashed avidly.

- Hey, chap, tell your granddaughter to bring us water! - He barked.

- Water? Just a moment...- and tea-server, too quickly for his age, ran up to them with a bowl filled with water.

The grimace of annoyance appeared on brigand's face:

- You fool!... Are you deaf? - The bastard has snatched the cup, poured water onto old man's head and broke the bowl on the floor. - I told you, let the girl serve us.

- Just a moment, one moment, respectful. Only do not touch my visitors and be merciful to my child, - an old man, having called his granddaughter, mumbled in faltering voice: - Khayriniso, my dear, give water to this valiant digit.

Fakhnavi and poet Kamol rose from their seats angrily. Saint father, by raising his right hand gave them a sign to sit. The girl with trembling hands brought water to a pock-marked. Ringleader drank it at one gulp and broke the bowl at a table. He fixed his gaze upon girl's thin neck, decorated with necklace of coral beads with the beaded coins and gave her a golden dinar. Khayriniso looked at her grandpa questioningly and he told as doomed:

- Take it, my daughter; it seems that it's God's will.

Khayriniso took a coin and wanted to go out but a ringleader grasped her collar and pushed her to himself with a force. Her necklace was torn and coins and coral beads scattered on the floor. All were astonished seeing the white skin of a girl but Khayriniso screaming covered her breast with crossed hands and with eyes full of horror rushed to the kitchen. Bandit was pleased and cried anticipating the forthcoming entertainment.

- Yes, that's God's will! I do accept the gift of destiny. First it is my turn and then all of you.

Bandits gave a neighing laugh anticipating an entertainment. Ringleader rushed after the girl, but a strict voice of Shamsiddin Kulol stopped him:

- Stop, jackal!

- What? - The pock-marked roared. - Who orders me here? - And he turned back and came near to the saint father who was at once protected by Majid and Fakhnavi.

Abboskozi was slowly moving to the tea-serving counter that moment. Brigands jumped up from their seats and gathered round their leader. Grinning and playing with knives, they began to approach pilgrims slowly.

- Who orders here? - Ringleader roared, taking a long thin knife out of his belt.

- You, boor, should apologize for offending an old man, - Shamsiddin Kulol said not loudly but quite clearly and went ahead pushing Fakhnavi aside.

Bandit bellowed and threw himself with knife onto Imam but Majid rushed in front of Imam and got the strike. He staggered, squeezed blood-
ing right shoulder, became flabby and fell down on the floor. Ringleader uttered triumphantly, made two steps forward and with malicious fury raised his hand with knife at saint father. The sound of weak whistle was heard and cutthroat-leader fell down near the legs of Imam with stuck out knife in his throat. Abboskozi had taken out his fierce knives and began to throw them quickly and very neatly. While the rascals regained consciousness four more of them writhed with pain and crept on the floor cursing. Others collected themselves and recognizing the place of attack had almost simultaneously threw their mortal daggers at Abboskozi but Imam's body-

guard shielded himself with a tray. Knives easily entered thin metal spoiling beautiful ornament of the tray. This time was enough for Abboskozi to throw two knives which hit their arms easily. Fakhnavi caught one of the hesitating bandits. He was shocked with such quick change of situation, he swung his knife senselessly, then carelessly came close to mullah Kamoliddin who threw a kettle with boiled water on him. Scalded rascal cried awfully. Poet Kamol, gathering all his strength into his fist blew him so strong that bandit became flabby and limped on his leader as a sack. Bricklayer Aziz drove the wounded bandits who tried to rise to their feet out of the tavern with a stick.

When everywhere became quite the door opened with the squeak and anxious Rauntangan appeared:

- What happened? What's going on here?

Imam stopped his chatting with gesture, bent over Majid, examined his and said:

- The hand should be bandaged quickly and somebody should call a doctor immediately, - saint father looked interrogatively at tea-server.

Tea-server understood Imam quickly and called the granddaughter and requested her to bring clean cloths.

The girl came holding clean white towel. She put a man's gown on - it seemed to belong to her grandfather.

- Can you move a little bit faster? - Tea-server grumbled in a temper. Taking a piece of cloth he handed it to Imam who bent over Majid and quickly bandaged his hand higher than the wound was.

- Now we need a doctor...- Shamsiddin Kulol cried abruptly raising his head.

Tea-server quickly went to the exit.

- I'll go with him, just in case, - Fakhnavi cried and followed the old man while Abboskozi gathered his knives in silence.

A doctor - young man - came quickly as if he was waiting behind the corner for the end of the fight.

He examined the wound and bandaged it with his medicaments and he concluded encouragingly:

- I do not see anything serious. It's good that you bandaged it immediately. He should lie two weeks until the wound gets better and then he recovers. If you need my help - tell Musin-ota, he knows where I live.

Hoja Rauntagan considering himself as a culprit of the occasion paid to doctor. Shamsiddin Kulol interrogatively looked at tea-server and the old man answered immediately:

- He'll live here until he recovers.

Majid, opening his eyes, whispered:

- I'll come up with you anyhow.

- Sure, sure, - Imam whispered and put his arms on the forehead of wounded, took out his wallet with money.

The owner of the tavern looked at him and negatively shooked his head:

- You saved my granddaughter from disgrace. I don't need money.

Saint father nodded with understanding, looked around the tea-house, at his quiet companions and applied to the old man:

- Tomorrow in the morning you should set forth to sheikh Nakshbandi and tell him that you came from Shamsiddin Kulol. Then tell him what happened here. And your house, Musin-ota, will be in full security. You can trade and not be afraid of anything.

The old man answered bending:

- Thank you very much, my dear. Let Lord save you on your way and bless your happy return.

Saint father took all beads and threaded coins collected by Fakhvani and handed them to Khayriniso.

- Take them, daughter. Coral pearls are the favourite decoration of Ma-verannahr. They serve as a talisman for a strong further posterity; they protect you against evil and violence. I wish you flourish as a flower, and prepare yourself for marriage.

The pilgrimes heard chirruping of birds when they went out to the street.

Golden-yellow orioles were noisily twitted on the branches of the apricot-tree. And also there was another pod of Bukharian blue tits add-

ed them flying from on branch onto another. The birds were greeting pilgrims as if they knew that during a long way through the sultry sands they wouldn't have such chance of listening their singing for a long time.

... The desert was flaming with the intense heat, sand-dunes were moving being uplifted into air by a strong wind garmsel", salt-marshes were sparkling on the sun and endless sand dust was everywhere. All living creatures were hiding from that heat, digging themselves into protecting sand or climbing on branches of scanty vegetation. Little creatures that lived in sultry sands steppe agama, striped lizards, snakes, turtles, desert spiders and scorpions adapted to that intense heat and hot winds. Also, desert white-throats, saxaul joys and sparrows, jerboa, sullen owl, steppe buzzards and southern booted warblers were accomodated to the hot conditions. All living creatures in the desert use the moisture which they get with the food reasonably, and they do not depend on the lack of water. But there were some delicate birds which needed water very much: white and black-bellied sandgrouses, dove-coloured pigeons. Despite all of this all living creatures strive for life-saving sources - to wells, karizes* and sardobs.*

After fierce heat, in the evening during sunset fantastic shades appear from the hardly noticeable bushes and sand-dunes that make the desert look as magical city. Verdure of the leafless bushes became thick and dark. Hills became deceitfully velvet. And there tiredly moving caravan appeared in the complete silence.

Caravan was replenished in Bukhara with pilgrims and was loaded with Bukharian, Khorezmian and Bulgarian goods. Heavy sacks were filled up to the tops. There were a lot of things: furs of sable, gray squirrel, ermine, marten, beaver, dyed hare, goat and also wax, arrows, white bark of poplar for tanning the leather, cod-liver oil and fish's teeth, beaver extract, amber, shagreen's leather, honey, nuts, swords, chain mails, biscuits, sweets, sesame, striped clothes, carpets, blankets, wonderful brocades for presents, counterpanes, coloured clothes, bows which could be used only by strong people, special cheese, Bukhara's fabrics - white, red, green.

Merchant Grigori with the help of Shamsiddin Kulol find out patterned clothes, curtains, carpets, counterpanes and little carpets for praying in the weaver's workshop besides the saddles and belly-bands.

After leaving Bukhara heavily loaded caravan passed the trade center Paykend and stuck in the village Ferebre for a long time as long as the customs collected the duties. The chief of the customs was pock-marked, lop-eared person with the insolent eyes and stern look which meant clearly that nobody could pass by him without paying. Having seen him poet Kamol exclaimed angrily addressing to saint father:

- Oh my God! How can such people live on this earth?

Fakhnavi added with smile:

- Quite on the contrary - our world likes them and takes care of them. They still live owing to their insolence. He surely keeps a lot of money in trunks at home.

- Such kind of people lives very long, - mullah Kamoliddin added.

- I wouldn't say so, - Imam said knitting his brows. - Such skinflint persons do not sleep days and nights and even when dying they think about money...

Meanwhile collection of customs duties was performed very actively. Grigori made a complete payment and when the chief started to find faults, Grigori threw him a little sack with money and got permission to go. Brushing his beard Grigori noticed that before the customs were located in Amul, and he concluded the the new place was more beneficial and convenient for customs officials.

Caravan crossed Jayhun through the wooden bridge and reached Amul. After a long way and passing through dusty Pashan caravan got to Kumshayhon village not far from city which was also called as the Northern gates of Marv. When they approached the the city getes it was already night time. They decided not to risk of looking for a sleeping place in the night city and built tents near small saxaul grove in front of the entrance to the city.

After light dinner which consided of dry scone, a piece of dried salted meat and qurut Shamsiddin Kulol went asleep with his companions. All were so tired during their travelling that no noise of usual hubub was heard. Owl-eyed night bird stone curlew whistled retardly being frightened by caravan - it warned its neighbour birds about danger. At night Imam was

awaken by strong pain in his chest. He was lying few minutes open-eyed without disturbing his companions and went out of the tent. The cold wind was slowly licking peaks of sand-dunes; vague moonlight was spread over endless desert. There was anxious silence. Ominous storm-cloud was creeping out of horizon.

And suddenly extreme darkness fell on Imam. His nose felt stinky smelt of a huge shepherd's sheepskin coat. Somebody's hands took him up and carried him not far with the heavy, drowning in sand paces, and then he was on the horse back. Shamsiddin Kulol heard tearing whisper of another man:

- Zohid, brother, don't do the sin, if pilgrim dies you will be punished by God and then you will never redeem your fault neither by praying nor by giving alms!

- Where have you been before? - Swift voice answered. - Pulat, did you get money? You did. And I'm not used to stop the job on halfway.

Again a low voice was heard:

- Zohid-aka, there's going to be a storm. Let's throw him somewhere and let storm finish him. He'll find a place in the heaven.

- Al right, we'll see...- ominous whisper answered and riders set out for their way.

Imam's hands became numb; legs were hanging as if they were broken. His back was aching. It was impossible to bear this longer. It was no air to breath, the fur of the coat was getting into his mouth and tickled his face.

Time stopped when robbers banged his head with something; he lost consciousness and fell down from the horse as a sack. At that time strong wind was turning into whirlwind sweeping away everything on its way, knocked people down off heir legs, kneeling horses and camels, boldly blowing through the sand-dunes' peaks. Dark storm clouds whirled and the earth pranced...

The moon disappeared and everywhere was dark - the end of the world started. The desert was droning and moaning with its bad weather, *myriads* of sand grains hurtled the faces and skin painfully up to the blood...

For two days caravan did not continued its way. Merchant Grigori said

of paradise! Temur stopped breathing, but seeing suspicious glance of the fowler, he answered mildly looking at the moon-like girl:

- I like your village, - he saw the understanding glance of the girl and nodded imperceptibly.

Having sparkled mysteriously with her attracting eyes, Dilshoda went back taking an empty jug with her. Boshbegi smiled as he anticipated that the girl invents something unusual for making fun. But as he promised to come - the word of djigit should be kept. He probably saw her somewhere before ... And he remembered suddenly: she was standing beside Zarina and told her something sullenly before the beginning of horse-race.

Gani, looking at her back said admiring:

- Dildora is a very fast rider, and she wanted to participate in competition with you, but the word of Otakhon is an order. She is a real Amazon girl-warrior of the steppe and is inferior to her rival in this respect. She uses sabre like a true warrior; shoots from a bow without miss and can catch any unbacked stallion with lasso. I would probably marry her but I am married already, - the fowler said with smile.

- Oh, my God! - Temur touched his head, anticipating the forthcoming night date.

- You too have a headache after yesterday drinking, - the hunter said sorrowfully. - Otakhon was very hospitable offering such a lot of drinks. Aren't you tired of my talks, Bekk? - Gani asked suddenly.

Temur shook his head.

- No, my friend, we haven't discussed all yet.

Encouraged fowler continued his favorite topic again.

- To train the hawk or eagle to the hunting you must give them possibility to eat the first prey. For example, it caught a hen-quail which I take on a long string, then the caught bird should be given to hawk or even its brains are better. After tasting it hawk begins to hunt more actively.

In his turn Temur began to describe his way of training:

- I cover the hawk's head with a cap and carry it in my hands. To make it accustomed to me I stroke its feathers, clean it and give food only by hand.

Then I close its eyes, tie to the long rope and train it to fly back to me with a special whistle. In a month I take him to hunting.

- Yes, - Gani continued, - a trained bird is expensive in the market, and this is how I make my bread.

It's unknown, how long they would discuss if they did not hear worried voices and cries: "She was caught and taken away!" Temur and Gani jumping over the carts and stepping on cackling hens rushed through the back yards to the village edge. A boy was riding a black horse and cried: "Zarina has just been caught with a lasso!"

That desperate cry expressed a true child's sorrow and offence - the love of all village boys was stolen. Bekk ordered him to give him his horse and like a wind galloped on a black horse.

Without paying any attention to surprised Gani Temur jumped on the horse.

- Where did they ride? - The ruler cried more loudly.

The boys showed far to the steppe. Temur lashed the horse so strongly that he could hardly stay in the saddle.

- Be careful, the warriors are from the mountains. We follow you! - Gani managed to cry after him.

A steppe wind carried his words out.

Temur saw the robbers after a long time of riding. They were ten. It was seen that they were dashing warriors as they managed to steal the girl in midday. They used the opportunity of wedding mess and came out of mountain pass through secret paths. Temur heard about these robbers stealing girls before. He lashed the horse harder. Two of the robbers parted from the rest. Temur already saw their smiling faces were seen; one was on amblor horse grinning, a smile of the other one showed the uselessness of his attempts as Temur was one against ten! He rushed towards the bandits bravely. Two arrows passed near his ears. Temur took his bow quickly and with trained movement threw the arrow. One of the djigits fell down, the second arrow hit the other one, and an iron arrow-head prickled his eye and he fell down. Then the young Bekk caught the robber's horse and let his tired horse away. Temur rode after the others and the pursuit was going

gold embroidery on which the weapon was fixed - it was a dagger with silver sheath. Through the opening of his gown kurte - smart shirt made of a black fabric was seen. After a short chat Mubarak-shoh Sanjari invited Imam and his companions to his house. He lived in the suburbs in a big house with a lot of servants. The house was rounded by a neatly cared garden.

After a wonderful lunch, when all of them were drinking aroma tea, the head of the eminent powerful family whom even governor Alibek was afraid of, put his left hand on his chest and politely requested to do a favor for him. Shamsiddin Kulol supposed such kind of question and attentively looking at host answered calmly:

- If I am able to do it - I will do my best.

- I think that you can do it. I request you to pray for my sick uncle, and I pay all expenses of your pilgrimage twice.

Shamsiddin surprisingly asked:

- Why I am given the honour of doing this?

Mubarak-shoh Sanjari stood up, walked over beautiful Turkmenian carpet, stood before the window thinking, then he sat sitting down on his place again and said sighing:

- Dear Imam, a lot of pilgrims pass through our village Mohan but I as the head of the respectable family can not see any worth person who could go for pilgrimage instead of my uncle. I inquired a lot of pilgrims of caravans and merchants, and all of them with one accord called you as the worthiest person and besides, you already went on pilgrimage.

- Well, I agree and accept your offer, - saint father agreed.

Before departure of caravan Shamsiddin Kulol was two times more at the house of Mubarak-shoh Sanjari. For Imam it was very interesting to communicate with Sanjari because shoh knew a lot of things about Turon.

Mubarak-shoh Sanjari bearing his solid white teeth in a smile, said:

- Saint father, very soon I'll visit your country for selling my horses and I would also like to buy a dozen of stallions and take them home.

Hearing this Shamsiddin Kulol without hiding his happiness, said:

- If you come close to Shakhrisabz in village Khojailgar, visit the house of Taragay and his son Temur by all means.

- Dear Imam, - the host bent, - if I'll be there, I certainly visit your friend.

Coming back in the evening to caravanserai Shamsiddin Kulol with his companion Sanjari met with Imam's alarmed fellow-travellers.

- Are you alive, saint father?

As it was found out, after recovering Majid kept his promise and caught his friends up. Waiting for his friends who went for sightseeing, he fell asleep near the gates of caravanserai and he saw Hoja Rauntangan in a big group of pilgrims passing by. He cried out the name of Shamsiddin Kulol joyfully and ran to his companions.

Hearing the name of saint father the beggar sitting near the caravanserai on his knees gave a start. He was thin, all in rags with dirty skull-cap on his head. Starting with wild cry, the tramp rushed to the man who was Shamsiddin Kulol as he thought. Like crazy he stabbed the man whom he took for the saint father and happily mumbling ran away. But Majid has caught running away tramp with the help of approaching guards. When he was searched several silver coins were found with him.

- Who did send you? - Shamsiddin Kulol cried Fakhnavi with anger and they gripped his thin neck.

The beggar with rolled up eyes opened blackness of his stinking mouth where a red stump was in place of a tongue and twisted convulsively.

- Leave him and let him go with peace, - Imam said with smooth voice.
- He was already harmed by destiny.

- But he will kill you at once - mullah Kamoliddin cried emotionally.

Irate cries were heard:

- Kill him, kill him! - Hoja Rauntangan hoarsely breathed out

- Death to vagrant!...

Only teacher Mamatkhalil smiled ironically and called his followers with sign and quickly went away.

Sanjari, raising his hand, cried loudly:

- All presents, leave this place! - And after leaving that place by the curious people he said to the saint mildly:-You should understand, saint father that when the punishment should be applied and you are kind - then

generosity can cause the death. They say that being mild you cannot make friends with an enemy - quite on the contrary this deepens his hatred. I do respect you for your being generous, but the criminal who broke the law of chariot should be punished.

- Yes, yes, I understand it, - Imam answered thoughtfully. - It is obvious that the human being is the highest creature among other living creatures, and the lowest one is a dog, while wise people state that a grateful dog is better than an ungrateful person. And nevertheless, he is a human being...

Mubarak-shah Sanjari, having smiled, nodded unapprovingly.

- You should not be so kind. I understand that you do not like to participate in the execution of trump but there's a danger for your life, that is why I take him with me for the court decision.

He gave a sign to the two of his bodyguards who threw a rope over him at once and jumping quickly off the horses, took the beggar from both sides. But as soon as they put him on the horse, there was a whistle of a dagger, thrown by Abboskozi, and the beggar fell on the navkars' hands. All people were breathless.

- It was probably better, - Sanjari said quietly, and having looked at the bodyguard, nodded approvingly.

Aziz - bricklayer came close to Imam and embraced him.

- Saint father, don't blame yourself. Everything happens by God's will...

Mubarak-shah Sanjari embraced the saint father and said good-bye warmly to his companions. Having wished them happy journey, he and his suite went away taking the dead beggar with them.

The merchant Grigori, having sold most of his goods, bought cotton, coats, silk and cotton blankets, silk textile, spring clothes made of light Marv cloths, copper, cheese, sezam oil and grape vinegar.

Before leaving the travelers visited the teahouse located on Anbar street, to have a well-known Marv pilau. They also tried sweet cookies made of sheep milk, tasted some juice made of famous Marv melons. After the noon prayer they went for sleep earlier to start their way early in the morning.

With the sounds of the first cocks crowling in the morning the caravan went through the southern gates, and again silence was everywhere in the desert.

Step-by-step caravan was passed one barkhan after another, moving from one well to another. The pilgrims were happy every time when they saw a sand-hare running away and hiding its traces, sometimes they saw a hedgehog with long ears, a sandy snake, a lizard that stood motionless in an aggressive pose like a stone and stiffen carpet viper snake. The sand-dune cats followed the caravan searching for the food but in vain - no food was left, and disappointed cats got nothing and went back to their holes.

A white saxaul and a sandy acacia as quarelled friends separated from each other and twigged weakly with their dried thorny branches. They also saw coumaris, kukmaroz, groundsel and other desert vegetation. Near the pond near the well at the destroyed caravanserai the travelers found a man's skull with the eggs of Bukhara blue-tit inside - they were white, a little yellowish with red and dark dots.

Having seen the skull, hodja Rauntangan shook his head:

- It is not a good sign...

Having seen the eggs of Bukhara bird Shamsiddin Kulol remembered Bukhara and the words of sheikh Nakshbandi who demanded them to return alive and only alive. Not far from the well they installed the tents for spending night. On a half-destroyed wall of the former caravanserai they saw a bird with gray coloring and mussed legs. It was sleeping apparently, but as soon as the curious poet Kamol, Fakhnavi and Keldibobo went closer to see it the bird awoke and looked interrogatively at the newcomers, as if asking what did they want. Then it flew aside and sat on the ruined fence again. It was a Bactrian horned owl.

In the evening when pilgrims prepared for sleeping they heard an awful moan...

- Oh, God! - frightened the travelers cried out and jumped off their places.

The crying moan was heard again and it seemed that it was child's cry. Fakhnavi got up and began to put on his clothes quickly.

- I shall go and kill it.

- Don't do that, my son, - Keldibobo cried with tears unexpectedly. - You should not take a sin on your soul, it is a sacred bird. I wonder how my grandsons are going on there. - Keldibobo kept crying.

- Well, well, - Abbaskozi grumbled, - you are being a companion to that night disturber.

The old man calmed down, dragged the blanket over himself, turned on side and stared at Shamsiddin Kulol. The saint father had started having caught his neighbours look. He shook his shoulders, lied on back and closed his eyes. The cry was heard again...

- What a monster, just tearing the soul, - Madjid uttered hoarsely.

- Yes, people say if this bird cries like this, then somebody dies, - the poet Kamoliddin said.

Then Keldibobo got up and said gloomily...

- I want to get some fresh air...- in the darkness he found Shamsiddin Kulol's robe. He put it on the old shoulders and went out of the tent.

The moon was shining over the tents. The dark sky with shining stars stretched over the old man. He thought about grandchildren. They surely were sleeping that time. Remembering that the old man felt warm tenderness and that was his last happy thought. Something flashed like a lightning, and Keldibobo with a black arrow in his right eye fell dead on gray sand which swallowed him, covering his ears, the hurt eye and lips which liked to kiss grandchildren so much.

Chapter XIV



WEDDING

After the attempt on his life when he nearly sank in the sack, Temur changed - he became more silent and thoughtful, did not understand jokes. He began to listen more, he could recite by heart the poems read by his friend Sayfiddin at once. But military games and trainings and exercises in different types of battle art were the main activities which he was devoted to; he did them till his was tired out completely.

Temur was fond of hunting as before. He spent days and nights in the mountains with his warriors. They brought home killed mountain goat or goitered gazelle.

His mother was ill often and used to any unexpected events, she wanted to see herself a future stepmother for her children. She often thought about death quietly and humbled with the thought of forthcoming death. The medicines of the doctor Ahmad added to her life, but they also had their limit as Temur's mother thought. Once she called a house council inviting the ruler Taragay and her children to the guest-room. In the alert silence emphasizing the importance of the moment she said looking at everybody with a gloomy glance:

- My beloved ruler, my sweet children, it seems that everything has its time. Rye ripens and after picking the yield it withers, the trees blossom and drop their fruits on the ground. God marks the destiny of every human being. My life is defined in the sky book - it fixes the life limits. I feel that my time is near the end. The hour of my death is not very far...

- Oh, no, my dearest, what are you talking about, - Taragay interrupted her, - now when our children grew up...

- That is why I began this talk, - she mentioned gloomily. - When God calls me, Iukun-khotun will be the only mistress in the house. She will not accept the presence of my children here. You are seldom at home and do not know what is going on right under your very nose. - The mistress told about it with some desperate rage which gathered during many years. - My nestlings need a good nest. After my going away... - hearing these words Kutlug Turgon-oga and Shirin cried with tears, and Temur frowned. Without paying attention to the cry of her daughters, she continued: - You can not marry during a year after my death or even more. Something can happen with them during this time. You need a mistress who can cook and prepare food for my children herself and who is able to choose reliable servants. - Having been tired after a long speech, the mistress drank a glass of milk and breathed out. - I am sorry for speaking in my children presence but anyhow, they feel that your elder wife wishes death to my nestlings, and deaf and blind hatred burns her black heart.

Taragay never heard such a sharp words from his younger wife, that's why he was surprised and got red, and then he hanged his head. Tegina-begim ended her speech:

- I found a bride for you. You, my owner, know her well. She is not a daughter of the powerful governor but her father is noble and rich enough and besides, she is hard-working and kind-hearted. Her name is Kadakhonum. Her father is Otakhon, the head of the big kin, all the village people listen to his advices. He has herds of horses, sheep, detachment of warriors who are very necessary for the trips and fights. Tegina-begim looked attentively at her husband Taragay who listened to her with surprise. - I used to be in that village. They welcomed me many times. I like to point

out that she is a real housewife. I think nobody blames you for your marriage with a young girl. I request you about this in the presence of my children and they also like you to marry. Everybody knows about my health. Then you can manage to feed any woman and also to provide her with silk clothes and brocade. - After a short pause she went on: - Father of Kadak always wanted to marry off his daughters to the ruler. It is an honor for him to become related with the Amir of Maverannah.

Taragay waved his arms being confused:

- It looks as you have already decided everything without me...

- I like to see the good care of my children from the side of step-mother before my death, and you will often be at home with young wife.

Tegina-begim untied a silky kerchief and put the amulets out: she hung amulet-gjavak on her husband's neck, she put a shell-kauri on silver chain (it was also called "camel's eye") on Temur, small daughter Shirin got sary-munchak - a black hand bracelet with yellow eyes, and fixed "Mati-tillo" - a golden moon from eastern jewelry suit "Bodomi" on the breast of the elder daughter Kutlug Turgon-oga. Tegina-begim was pleased that at last she managed to tell everything and besides, she had also some surprises left: she looked inscrutably at her children and said smiling:

- And moreover, Kadak could look after me as well.

- And what about me? - The elder daughter said with offence in her voice. - Have I looked after you badly?

- My daughter, it seems that you will leave us soon and be married.

- What are you speaking about? - The elder daughter asked with surprise.

Taragay got red out of rage and said:

- Are you getting crazy today, an old woman?

Temur was watching his mother nervously and waited for her answer quietly.

- We are getting old, father, and who is becoming mad - nobody knows. Did you forget that you agreed and accepted the present - this golden bracelet "donador"? - And she pointed at the hand of her elder daughter. - Did you forget that saint father Shamsiddin Kulol who is on pilgrim-

age to Mecca was the matchmaker. When you were absent, my lord, this set of golden jewelry was brought. Soon our future relatives will come from Bukhara. The name of fiance is Dovud and he belongs to the dynasty of Barloss.

The members of the family were shocked. After expressing all this striking information Tegina-begim was quiet.

- I'm very glad! - The elder daughter exclaimed unexpectedly. - Mother, let's look at the presents sent to us for the wedding holiday.

Tegina-begim began to untie a white silky bundle which was in the chest.

- My dear, everything is already prepared, - Taragay said with pleasure.

At last Tegina-begim untied the kerchief with wedding jewelry and they were sparkling brightly. Shirin-oga looked at the rare gold articles joyfully.

- I would also like to have such things... - she said

Temur noticed strictly:

- My sister, your time will also come soon, too and you will get such presents.

Taragay said smiling:

- Nevertheless, I found a good fiance for my daughter.

His wife mentioned sighing:

- If only he will be a good man, - and she began to lay jewelry on the big silky pillow.

The future bride liked a forehead jewelry made by Khiva craftsmen "Ostma-tuz" most of all. Kutlug Turgan-oga fixed it carefully on the daughter's eyebrows.

- Mom, they are lifting to temples, - the elder daughter said capriciously looking at the mirror.

Mother, taking the next adornment mentioned tenderly:

- My dear, it must be so, it underlines the curving of your eyebrows. And look at this diadem - it will match you.

- While her daughter was trying the diadem on, the mistress put "kadjak" - the earrings in the form of Persian cucumber on the pillow. Tegina-begim put them through the ears of her daughter. Then she shouted with excitement:

- You are a real princess.
- She will be, of course, - Temur said wondering by his sister. Shirin Bek-oga was running over the room, jumping and saying:
- I want to grow up as fast as possible and to be a fiance.
- At last Taragay smiled and announced:
- Mother, you managed to persuade me and I am going to marry.

Strong wind swayed the expanse of grass, feather grass and worm wood, spreading dopey mint smell all over the boundless steppe. Getting the life-giving moisture from God the earth accumulates the water of rains and snows and then distribute it drop-by-drop for feeding bulbs and rootstocks: red poppies, proud tulips, nourishing sedge which added to the beauty of the colourful flower steppe carpet consisted of the wild barley, lilac-rosy flowers, juicy camel's-thorn. To every plant the peculiar color and the time of the last dawn were inherent. Some of them produced more fruits and the others lost their flowers quickly, bending a small flower-head before this wonderful and unique world of good and bad happenings of the glory and dishonor, of happiness and unhappiness.

The wedding preparations started. The father of Kadak-khonum was paid kalim consisted of ten pedigree horses, seventy sheep and four camels, several sacks of flour, rice, sugar and barley, vodka and amber-color wine in huge earthenware jags.

In a week the squad riders headed by Taragay accompanied by the djigits of Temur went to the kin estate of fiance. They took two hundred golden dinars with them which were given to the father of the future bridegroom Otakhon. The host and his wife met the guests with music and dances. The guests were followed to the guests' yurt. The yurt of the village head was in the center near a small grove and distinguished among the green pastures by its huge size. Not far from the main yurt the yurts of children were. The yurts of the relatives were not far from them while the yurts of the warriors and slaves were placed far, near the sheep-fold.

The yurt for guests was fixed on the left side from the main one. The entrance was from the eastern side, opposite the door a fire place was - it

was the most honorable place. Fire-place is the center of the yurt, the place where meal was cooked and source of heating in cold months was. It was regarded as sacred place. The yurt was covered by felted carpet "Kizil-ip-sir-mak" on which the red waves were outlined with green piping.

The father of fiance Otakhon wore a holiday robe "faradji", put on a silky belt, a soft fur hat was on his head which was fringed with beaver fur, his dark-red trousers were tucked into yellow boots made of camel's skin. After greetings they passed to tea-drinking. The table was full of delicious snacks and food: different types of fresh scones and numerous small plates with different nuts were on the cloth. Beef cheese smelt attractively. But all guests astonished when they saw a lot of meat on the dishes. Dishes with the boiled sheep heads were put in front of the old people expressing special respect for them. The brisket was put in front of Temur and Taragay. The ribs and bones were put in front of the warriors; the dishes with the tail fat and liver were put over the whole table. The servants served the big cups with pea soup. Then lamb was brought into, the barbecue pieces of meat were mixed with slims of bright fat. Ayran, koumiss and vodka were served for drinking.

At first the people did not support the conversation actively. The hosts and guests were sitting with crossed legs, eating and drinking tea sedately and listening to each other attentively. But after some cups of strong drinks they became more relaxed and uninhibited, people smiled and jokes were heard, and the time for stories and recollections came. The hosts, match-making guests and warriors sat comfortably with cushions and stretching their legs and discussed different things laughing. Otakhon with a loud voice addressed Taragay:

- Bekk, I accept all your requirements and now as you see everything is all right. It is time to tear the scone half. Then in the honor of our holiday I offer to organize a horse game "persecution of a girl" - we, the people of steppe call it in this way.

Taragay was thinking, and then the head of the village said:

- Please, accept it, don't refuse. I pay the prizes myself. When I married my sons I organized holidays, now I marry off my dear daughter, I will not be greedy. Let people see me enjoying celebration with the ruler.

Taragay smiled and agreed:

- I'm ready. I add my prizes too.

- That's wonderful, - Otakhon got happy. The first will be the best rider of our village - Zarina. May be Dildora? - No, Zarina. Nobody could get her in these competitions yet, - and he, smiling cunningly, bowed to the bekk and asked: - And who is from your side? Is it Temur?

- Temur! - The voices of the warriors were heard.

- Temur is worthy of the kin, - Otakhon cried. - Tomorrow the first honorable guests will be announced - Temur and Zarina. - Having drunk the cup of koumiss and cleaning his mustache, Otakhon said: Temur is the best warrior. He is like snow leopard but my girl is also not bad. Taragay, let's bet?

- It is not a problem - I would like to bet, anyhow - Taragai smiled and flapped with his thin hand on the fat palm of the village head.

A man who entered the room of the bride who was in the jurt of the wife of Otakhon's brother, had to pay ransom. The ransom was paid for soothing women who didn't let the fiance to come near the bride. People were squandering coins on the decorated kerchief. While Amir Taragay was throwing coins the bride, Kadak found time to whisper Temur in the merry mess:

- The name of Zarina's racer is Aigyr.

Temur was glad and nodded his head with gratitude imperceptibly.

The racing "Persecution of a girl" was organized just in the outskirts of village. The participants of the competition gathered under the old nut-tree. The spectators were waiting near the small hill not far from the start. Sounds of music were heard. The national musical instrument zurna called to the show; there were also gently playing rubab* and a drum beating a furious rhythm. Anticipating an attractive show, the old and young people cried out names of the first participants: "Temur", "Zarina"!

Zarina was a pretty girl. Her hair was hidden under the turban decorated with a bow and a silk caftan fit her graceful figure tightly. She put on a skirt "beldemchi" - the important part of a military cloth of Amazon ladies-warriors, it was tucked in high boots. A wide belt was fixed with a white clasp

with a picture of a flying panther. A waving white veil "Come on, catch me" was fixed on the collar by a little spin.

She rode up to Temur, smiled challengingly and cried out:

- Well, Bekk, if your horse is fast enough - try to catch me! - With these words she rushed to the start line.

Referee beat a drum. The girl cried loudly: "Aiya!", and the horse rushed forward. In a minute, after the referee's sign, Temur galloped, too. He spurred the racer, he ran to catch Zarina. She was very far as a white cloud in the sky. "I am not able to catch her, the referee kept me very long, - Temur thought and lashed his horse. - Come on, my dear horse, I can not loose", - the ruler whispered. But the distance between him and Zarina was great. And then Temur got up on the stirrup and called quietly: "Aigyr!". Running in front, the horse started and lost its temp. Surprised Zarina lashed her racer on the left and right side with a thick lash. But that lost time was enough to catch the rider and tore away the veil from her head with the lash. With a loud voice he began waving the veil. The same excited encouraging cries of the crowd were the award for him.

When the racing was over Temur was awarded by the sabre the handle of which was decorated by jewelry. Otakhon embraced Temur and said:

- This sabre was got in an important campaign as it belonged to khan. This weapon will bring you good luck and you'll be a leader.

Taragay presented the son with a pacer; Zarina kissed the young ruler - that was settled according to the custom. Putting on air, she said:

- Temur, I gave you back the deserved.

Temur put the bridle of the racer presented by his father into the girl's hand and said:

- It's for your kiss. By the way, - he added, - I called the name of your racer.

The young girl threw her head back slightly, thought for a while and said:

- Otakhon is very vain, nobody could win the racing. You are the first.

- Then she whispered: - Bekk, if you have time, I'll wait for you under the old nut-tree. I want to make a present for you.

When it got dark, after evenings pray bekk met with Zarina. The girl brought a thin pole with a lash of horse tail on the top.

- Are you going to hang me for your loosing?! - Temur kidded.

Zarina said without explanation of her actions.

- Come on, Bekk, - the riders rushed to the steppe overtaking each other.

Near a big oak-tree the girl stopped the horse and jumped off. She took a pole and called Temur. The young Bekk followed her without understanding anything.

- It is here, - Zarina said. The girl took a stick and fixed a piece of tow moistened with black oil taken from a small pumpkin vessel and fixed it near the loop. She scratched a fire-stone, put a tow on fire the tow and up the pole, the fire lightened the bird, sleeping on the branch. It was a young falcon. Zarina carefully put the pole with a loop on the bird. The loop slipped over the bird, waving its feathers, a falcon moved and got calm again. Suddenly the girl pulled the loop and the bird fell on the ground. Having it in her hands, the girl said:

- It's falcon - my present for you, my Bekk. You can do with it whatever you like.

The bird was looking at the fire as enchanted. The girl pricked carefully its lower eyelids, put a thin silk thread through and bound on the back of the bird's head. The bird's eyes were closed. Zarina took a sack and put the bird into it.

- When the bird's eyes are closed, it isn't afraid and sits quietly. Otherwise, it will beat itself on the sides and be wounded.

Temur looked at the girl with admiration and said:

- Zarina, you have got your revenge for your loosing, - and the ruler smiled.

The girl smiled in response.

Temur sat on his horse, took the sack, tighten the bridle and said:

- Zarina, thank you for your present, now, let's go back - otherwise people will worry and rummage around a whole steppe. May be, we meet us one day if God lets.

When the sounds of the hooves of their horses were calmed down, Jaguy Barloss and Khudaidad appeared out of the ant hill, shaking themselves from ants nervously.

- It was your idea to lie just on the ant hill for watching over these two,
- Khudaidad said furiously to his friend.

- But everything was seen nicely from here, - Jaguy Barloss murmured, aiming his bow at Zarina just a few minutes before - Well, we should be in a hurry, - he hastened Khudaidad.

The latter, taking out his horse from the trees mentioned:

- I don't understand anything. I bet that nothing was between them.

- You do not need to understand anything, - Jaguy Barloss, answered already sitting on the horse.

In the morning Temur presented the falcon to Otakhon, without agreeing with father even. When the head of the village saw such a present he cried out:

- Gani!

The warriors were working in the yard: one of them flaid a sheep, the next was frying the liver, the third one was cutting wood and several young men sang a love song accompanied themselves on rubabs.

Gani appeared as out of the earth:

- I wait for your order, my master!

Otakhon looked at the young fowler with his dim eyes and ordered loudly, staggering:

- Well, Gani, look at this present which the young ruler gave me. While I play backgammon with amir you should catch a hawk. Do not loose.

- Yes, my master, - Gani put the knife which he sharpened into the scabbard.

Taking a clap-net and turtle dove, he invited Temur and his warriors to go outskirts the village.

- One hawk lives here and it often catches hens and recently it caught Otakhon's cock. This is my bad luck, - Gani told willingly. - If the luck favors us we catch the hawk today, if not - then we should wait for a long time. It's a cunning bird.

The young hunter fixed a trap quickly.

The warriors watched the actions of fowler impatiently lying on the grass near.

At last Gani called all, and they hid in a small ravine. They did not wait long, as the hawk appeared soon. Spreading its wings, it flew slowly over the lawn. Suddenly the bird noticed the turtle dove and falling straightly, it caught a tied bird. When the hawk flew up to the sky, it collided with the net and got entangled. Jako and Suleyman were the first near the trap. Suleyman, who wanted to free the bird carefully cried suddenly like bitten. Gani covered almost free bird with the robe. Suleyman, showing his blooded finger, smiled and said respectfully:

- Being in captivity it is still fighting.

Gani explained Temur that the bird must be fed with beef four or five times a day, for difference they can have dawns, pigeons, sparrows, for health-the meat of a tit, a marsh corn-crack. and cormorant for eating. But the meat of magpie and crow could be harmful. Temur was a good hunter himself, but he never missed a chance to get knowledge.

Coming to the village Temur let his warriors go out, and they were glad and accepted the invitation of the local warriors to play the game "Chovgan".

The young Bekk liked to play horse polo but he refused as he felt sick after drinking alchcohol.

He and the bird hunter were alone in the back yard and talked about the details of bird hunting, about its secrets and tricks.

A girl came up and invited the youths to have meals. Temur refused, and then an persistent stranger-girl poured koumiss into the cup from the jag and gave it to the young ruler. Temur drank a refreshing drink not looking at her and thanked by nodding his head. The girl bowed to the sitting ruler and whispered with intermittent breath:

- I'm Dildoraoy. Don't be surprised and condemn me. I'll wait for you near the old nut tree at midnight.

Temur wanted to use a bad language first but when he turned back and saw a pretty face he stopped. Her sad languishing eyes were looking at him and smoothly shaped mouth smiled and showed pearl-like teeth. The peri

firmly to saint father's companions: "We won't move until we find Imam alive or dead".

Abboskozi also disappeared but he wasn't taken away a sheepskin coat by severe storm. He went for looking for Imam. Shamsiddin Kulol was saved by that damned peasant's sheepskin coat which protected his mouth from the sand and from filling his respiratory tract with sand.

Some inner intuition directed Abboskozi to that sand dune where something dark was seen on yellow sand. He dugged Imam out of sand and carefully laid him on his dressing-gown, took off his flask from his belt and gave it to Imam. Taking a sip of liquid saint father opened his eyes widely and spat out scalding liquid with the abusive words. Not paying attention Abboskozi examined the old patched and torn peasant's sheepskin coat and tenderly said smiling:

- You are alive, father...

- Yes, I am and what happened with me? - Shamsiddin Kulol asked shaking himself from the sand.

Young bodyguard was happily looking at pale Imam with entangled beard, it was difficult to recognize that venerable religious high official who was famous all over Nasal and Kesh in him.

- Yes, at home all will be surprised seeing you, - Abboskozi smiled shaking off the dust from his dressing-gown.

- They accept me anyhow; - Imam rose tiredly and waved his hand.

- The main thing is to get home... How did you find me? - Imam asked surprisingly.

Abboskozi, taking on his dressing-gown came close to Imam and pocked his hand into pocket of his gown full of holes and took out wisp of smelling verdure and threw it up to the air. Taking off his boots and shaking off from dust, young bodyguard started explanation:

- Before departure Temur gave me aromatic verdure protecting against all troubles and told me never to leave you alone. Before sleeping I put that grass into your pocket and its smell helped me to find you. Telling you seriously, it was just good luck. I went out after you almost immediately. I saw them kidnapping you on the horse but I didn't shout because decided

to follow you... I wouldn't let them escape if not a storm. I lost you, there was nothing to do but only to cover up with dressing-gown, wind it round my face with turban and lay down under the suksoval. After the storm I was looking around that place where I saw that desert jackals last time just before the wind whirl. There I saw a black spot of your peasant's sheepskin coat which served as your identifying sign.... Taking on his boots and shaggy turban Abboskozi asked Imam caringly: - Do you like me to carry you, saint father, or you'll go yourself?

- Certainly, I can, - Imam answered. - So long without movement and pray. Now I want to walk and pray to Lord for his saving me.

Pilgrims were very happy to see Shamsiddin Kulol again. Caravan after two days of forced stay because of that severe storm raised and set forward for the further way. Ancient city Marv was very close and attracted tired pilgrims.

Marv was the city of bazars, famous with its Akhaltekin horses, delicious melons and coloured clothes...

In the center of the city on the crossroads of main streets the house of the governor was situated. Near the house on the square the town criers announced governor's orders and public executions were performed on that place. Not far from the mosque the block of money-changers was. City had five main gates. Merchant Grigori's caravan passing through the northern gate into the block of jewelries and the street of tanners, awaking citizens with the bell ring stopped in front of the caravanscrai.

Shamsiddin Kulol was discussing with mullah Kamoliddin and Abboskozi his incredible adventures and they came to conclusion that all attempts of bandits of Imam's life failed but with such insistent enemies could achieve their goal. That's why he should be a little bit watchful. Pilgrims accepted invitation of dean Mubarak-shoh Sanjari who was also engaged in distributing water for agriculture.

The meeting took place in mosque after the noon prayer. Honored noble man came close to saint father and introduced himself. He was a tall man with deep-saeted eyes and well-cared beard, he had a big white lamb-skin turban on, an expensive quilted dressing-gown with belt decorated with

on. At last he saw Zarina. The robber-fiance lashed the horse so strongly that he could hardly follow the race of the other riders. The horse with two riders on began to remain behind. Temur aimed and threw the arrow. The helpless fiance twitched and dropped forward, pressing the girl under his body. The horse slowed down. Temur rode up to Zarina, cut the ropes and kicked the ill-fated fiance down. Seeing returning bandits he cried:

- Zarina, ride a horse back hard!

But the girl squeezed her lips stubbornly, turned the body of the bandit over, took the bow with arrows of the bandit and hid behind the horse.

Temur jumped off the horse quickly and joined the girl.

The horse which they hid behind was wounded by several arrows and fell on the ground. Zarina and Temur lay flat behind it.

Temur shot very accurately and fast and his djigits hurried to help their Bekkp - so, that the bandits flustered and disappeared in the nearby grove.

First Sayfiddin appeared. Getting down he saw safe and sound Temur and exclaimed: "Oh, thanks God!" Then he looked at the girl significantly and said angrily:

- If beautiful ladies are somewhere - every time they cause troubles and dangerous adventures.

Zarina looked with her bright glance at the poet and mentioned archly:

- Of course, if you are late to help your friend, the danger may be quicker than death.

Sayfiddin could say nothing and noticed:

- I see a quick victory here.

The girl came up to Temur and said with challenge:

- I'm ready to gather Amazon-girls of the steppe under the banner of such ruler, - and kissed the young Bekk.

Sayfiddin nodded his head meaningfully and exclaimed surprisingly:

- Two kisses for a day, isn't it too much?

The racing pursuit went on - the djigits wanted to reach the bastards.

Burnt with the day-long heat the steppe was resting and enjoying the night cool. Cicadas were creaking tirelessly. The horse herd was grazing in the night cool. Moonlight brightened the earth by mysterious and silvery rays. The black velvet of the sky sparkled with precious stones-like stars.

Temur left the village easily. Tired guests and hosts were sleeping soundly. "The nut-tree is a place of meeting in that village", - Temur thought making himself comfortable under the thick crown. He did not wait long. Dildora came together with small brother of ten-twelve year old. Temur was indignant first but she requested the boy to go to their grandmother.

Dilshod was not very happy with this proposal and looking at Temur suspiciously went away.

Biting her lips Dildora sat near the ruler and began her talk.

- Zarina was lucky again. You, a stranger, won the race with your courage in the competition with village men who missed the best girl as well. You one was against the five. Djigits of our village pronounce your name with proud.

Temur looked at the girl with reproach. Dildora got that glance and breathed out:

- I'm sorry for my being impudent. I could never tell anybody about my inner thoughts in my village. But you are a guest, and I trust you. I want to share my sorrow with you.

Temur was admiring the girl silently, the confusion suited her. Feeling his approval Dildora was encouraged.

- I'm always the second in the village, - the girl said suddenly with offense - In throwing the arrows from a bow, horse racing, singing in the ring - everywhere Zarina is the first. I must participate in that competition, but Otakhon has chosen Zarina. I do not like to live here anymore, - Dildora moaned. - Take me along with you from this place.

Temur became serious and nodded his head:

- My dear, what is making trouble: sorrow, pain, unrequited love?

Girl's shoulders lowered but Dildora straightened her back and looked at the young man with a challenge:

- You are acute, Bekk.

- It is not necessary to be an oracle, it is just enough to see your gloomy eyes, - Temur answered.

- Oh, yes, I fell in love with a warrior of our village but I did not know that he loved Zarina. But she rejected him. He married another girl, and now doesn't want to meet with me, being afraid of his wife's brothers.

Temur pronounced with understanding:

- Forget him - there are a lot of warriors in the steppe...

The girl closed her face with her hands and moaned:

- I'm pregnant.

Temur looked at her surprisingly. Dildora threw herself to the chest of the young Bekk. The latter moved aside carefully and asked firmly:

- Do you want to annoy Zarina?

Dildora straightened her back and looked at the ruler's eyes courageously:

- You may not believe me but God is a witness that as soon as I saw you, I realized that you are predestined for me. My blood is boiling and burning - she was almost strangled by feelings.

Her hair-dress was dishevelled, and her plait fell on the breast.

Temur stretched his hands

Early morning haze covered the village. Dark sky was cleared up. Light wind cooled the faces of lying people. Dildora opened her sleepy eyes and saw Temur bending over her, stroked his hair and whispered:

- My warrior, I am grateful for this night. This time Zarina lost, - and Dildora burst out laughing.

Temur, straightening his back, pulled her plait kidding, his eyes twinkled and he said:

- What do you want for this wonderful moment?

Dildora smiled, her body was bright under the bleuish morning darkness. Straightening her hands to disappearing stars she said:

- Well, let's dream. I want thirty horses of different color for changing them every day to make Zarina envious - she added smiling.

- You will have the gold-mane horses, - Temur answered firmly.

Dildora put her hair on her shoulders gracefully and then uttered slowly:
- I do not need anything from you. I've already taken all I wanted. I'll never forget this night.

On the firm branch of the nut-tree tear-stained Dilshod was sitting with a dagger - he saw and heard everything. He was squeezing his teeth and dashed against the tree swearing his sister and her lover.

The time came for the match-makers to leave. They agreed that wedding should last during 15 days. Both sides were satisfied with the presents given to each other and parted warmly and cordially.

Three months later the warriors brought a herd of different-coats horses loudly scraping by lashes. They were directed to Dildora's yard. The head of the warriors being sure that he got to the right place and said with a muffled voice:

- Best wishes from Temur, - pointing to the stallions he added - They are for your friend's envy.

Bowing ceremoniously he whistled his warriors and they disappeared immediately. The father of Dildora stared at Dildora surprisingly, and she could only say with a pain in her voice:

- My father, please, explain my future husband and your beloved son-in-law that the old kin debt was paid back.

Dilshod chose a horse he liked and jumped on it and flopping its silky neck he uttered with admiration:

- For all that Temur-djigit kept his promise!

Chapter XV



INTENTION OF ENEMIES

Kashkadaryo oasis is spread from the west to the east for forty-three farsakhs, from the north to the south for thirty kulems. Kashkadaryo valley is divided from Zarafshon river basin by spurs of Zarafshon range at a long distance. The Nasaf region was formed of mountain and piedmont areas of Koratepa, Chakilkamen and vast Karshi, Nishon and Jom steppes, the Suldukly desert was on the west. The oasis is watered with numerous rivers the main of which the Kizildaryo and the Kashkadaryo are. The water of the rough Langardaryo river flowing down from mountains is taken for irrigation of lands of flourishing valley. Deepening the river bed the rivers washed the banks out which resulted in the formation of many sandbanks, sandy icelands which were little by little covered with vegetation. The banks of the river lagoons were gradually overgrown with riparian forest and impassable bushes. On the curved river banks the crooked tals with green polished leaves grew, the groves of silvery-leaf djida grew on the river banks spreading a spicy smell of sugary reddish berries. The straight poplars friendly greet everybody by their leaves. When spring comes the birds which fly from the far cold snowy countries - geese and ducks - fly

to the north. But when the buds open the birds come back home from Egypt and from the banks of the Rum Sea. They are met with a noisy greeting of the local old residents - partridges and field sparrows. And the wedding and marriage fights, the ritual competitions of proud male-birds begin. Over the mash the trills, languid roulades, love calls, sweet chirp and sharp clicks, cuckoo, drum trills of woodpeckers are heard. The bird-holiday is wonderful and it reminds the holiday of Kashkadaryo valley people.

The mansion of Ubaymirzo is situated on the picturesque bank of Kashkadaryo. The owner is a broad-shoulder man with a hawk-like face and penetrating eyes; the glance of these eyes was aggressive and tried to subject a person to his will. His blueish-black beard outlined his strong chin. His friends called him Korasokol - black beard. He wore silky Chinese robe.

Ubaymirzo was watching the sitting-rooms. The house consisted of eight rooms the floors of which were covered with carpets. On silky kurpachas^{*} colored cloths were laid with the eastern sweets on. In one of the rooms a beautiful fireplace was fixed, a door directed to the two joined big rooms for the guests. The yard was enormous and ended with muddy waters of the Kashkadaryo. A lot of trees grew in a big garden.

Ubaymirzo served as a kukaldosh - he was responsible for a secret surveillance of Kazagon. Karasakal was always busy - a state business took a lot of time. And that quiet house-shelter originated due to his friend, the hokim of Karshi - Musa Jaloir. He did not bring his family which lived in the city of Nasaf to that country house. He invited his close friends there for entertainment and booze-up after hard and nervous days. He met spies and agents and had secret talks. And before his guests coming he was waiting for his brother - Ubaydullo, who promised to visit his brother on the way. Commonly speaking the guests must come long before, on the day of circumcision of Jibachikula's son, but that party Karasakal organized when his child was five year old. It was a rainy autumn day of the last year. Ubaymirzo arranged a big party with entertainment and goat-cutting but a lot of his friends couldn't come because of different reasons, and they often kidded on the occasion when Karasakal cel-

celebrates his son's "birthday". That's why he sent invitations to his friends for the next spring. Ubaymirzo remembered the day of his son's cutting very well. A skinny master came, put off his wet coat slowly, dried his hands and has taken his instruments out of little leather bag. The master requested a slave for help and explained him what to do. Then he smiled at the boy friendly:

- Djigit is big already. Your father has probably presented saber to you?

Ubaymirzo answered instead of his son, with the tremble in the voice:

- Jubachikul has everything - a horse, a bow with arrows.

The master screwed up his eyes:

- Well, our hero is a real warrior.

The master did slowly his job drawing the attention of the boy away. The old slave helped him. When the boy cried out of the pain Ubaymirzo closed his eyes, trembled and put the blade, which he caught unwillingly back to the scabbard. Father decided to bear that test only for the sake of his son as there were a lot of enemies around. - Thanks God - everything was done as it should be. When the master finished, he asked the father if he will be invited to the wedding party of the boy.

Then getting recollections away, Ubaymirzo passed to the yard to the cages with pheasants - he organized the fight of males. Those birds were placed near the hen, which encouraged them with its cooing. The furious rivals were prepared for the final fight for extravagant female bird. Boiling with anger the male-pheasants were ready for a fatal fight. Their bright, rainbow-colored feathers lightened, their tails trembled with rage. Being admired with his male-pheasants Karasakal anticipated that the fight would be acute and the guests would be satisfied.

The warriors informed about the arrival of Ubaydullo. Karasakal met his brother in a secret room. Sheikh refused to have meals and requested to send the servants out.

- We have a limited time, that's why I don't want anybody see me. I have got a present for you. He is an athlete of extreme strength, nobody can compare with him in the world. Do, please keep him away of people, so that no one could see his weak and strong features, just let him fight with workmates.

After saying all these words khazret breathed heavily and said bending his head: - The situation in the palace is complicated. Kazagon is changed very much - or may be somebody whispers him some information about our tribe. Anyhow, a fatal thing happened. He sent his people to check the list of taxes for the last three years. This means the end of everything for me, - khazret smiled sadly: You see, brother, the ruler is similar to crocodile: when it sleeps - it isn't dangerous, but when the monster awakens, it shows its teeth.

Karasakal asked tiredly:

- Is our situation so bad?

- I don't know, - khazret shook his head. - But we need to undertake actions... We must divert the ruler's attention away from our ulus.

- If he catches me, that one-eyed wolf-hound will tear me to death.

- You too have a lot of sins? - Khazret kidded but immediately understood that it was not time for quarrelling and said: - I've some ideas about this.

Kukaldosh burst out laughing sorrowly:

- Brother, nothing makes harm to you. You accepted from him an oath in faithfulness to the ruling of Maverannahr.

The brother of Karasakal said with hatred:

- But he began his revising inspection from me. Never mind, I gave him birth and I will kill him.

- Stop, stop, - Karasakal interrupted his brother. -It is not the way out. We are in the same boat, let's be careful.

His brother drank a pomegranate juice just at one gulp. After drinking he has wipen his lips.

- We should first spread the rumour that legal heir of Maverrannahr's throne is Sultan Kran ibn-Saur from the kin of Genghis family. My dervishes would do it as good as they could. You, my brother, find twenty cut-throat Mongols and on the behalf of Sultan Kran ibn-Saur you should steal Shahnoza - the mistress of Hoja Hasan Div. And in exchange for this you demand only one thing - to know from the people of khan's yard if the amirs and bekks are ready to help the pretender to throne Sultan Kran ibn-Saur in case of upheaval and what is the position of clergy on this point.

His friend Vakhid should prompt him that the khazret is ready to swear the Mongol khan. Let Hoja Hasan Div write a secret dispatch to that Mongol prince informing that the grandees of Maverannahr are looking forward for returning of a true Mongol khan.

Karasakal nodded his head untrustfully:

- Kesh's vizir wouldn't do it. If anyone got that dispatch, he would surely find his death. No, he wouldn't want to do this.

- For the sake of his mistress Hoja Hasan Div would do everything! - Sheikh answered firmly. - But only then when you get the answer from the pretender to the throne, you may send the mistress back to Hoja Hasan Div. That paper mess will incite the kin of Genghis Sultan Kran ibn-Saur to undertake military actions. But if anything will happen to the mistress of that heartbreaker, - everything will be spoiled. He steems her very much. Being blind falling in love with Shahnoza, the vazir of Kesh sent her husband Gasan, a merchant, to the foreign countries. I helped him inadvertently but this is another story, and it's time for him to pay back.

Karasakal shook his head hesitatingly:

- All this looks unreal... If these plans fail - we ourselves will be burnt in the Mongol flame.

- Oh, no, - the khazret said slowly. - In this case we must help our ruler Kazagon as much as we can, let him really feel our support. There is no use of his children. Amir-zoda Abdullo is womanizer; if he sees any skirt he looses his head at once. The other son of Kazagon is weak-willed man.

- But there is a little wolf Hussein ibn-Musallab, a hard nut to crack, - Ubaimirzo added. If he occupies the throne then he will take revenge for his grandfather.

Khazret Ubaydullo shook his head thoughtfully:

- The nestling grows very quick.

- Yes, this boy is grown up already, - Karasakal exclaimed, and wrinkled his face so that his thick eyebrows gathered dangerously at the bridge of his nose.

- Amir Kazagon wants to marry his beloved son to the Mongol princess.

- Whom? - Khazret asked surprisingly.
- To the daughter of the late Kazagon-khan Saroy Mulk-Khonum.
Khazret bit the tip of his tongue and even swore:
- The ruler doesn't waste the time... He is still strengthening his power. No, that wedding could not be. With the support of Mogolistan he will destroy us... the wedding should be postponed.

- Have it your own way, - Ubaymirzo answered and stroked his black bear.

Ubaydullo suddenly smiled cunningly.

- To force the pressure on Amir Kazagon we must give an illusive hope for getting the throne to Amir Tugluk-Temur. The Mongol protege Abu-ka Kaunis can do it very well, he hates Amir Kazagon. - Khazret burst out laughing. - And you, my brother should help to make his range double.

Karasakal smiled enfeebly.

Suddenly khazret shuddered himself and looked at his brother with non-twinkled and cool eagle-like look. - By the way, the saint father Shamsiddin Kulol is still alive, safe and sound.

Kukaldosh suddenly felt bad, his feet trembled and he felt a sharp pain in the stomach; he squeezed himself but not to show his weakness, he straightened his back and said hardly:

- God saves him... - He breathed out and then said with an even temper:
- Some guilty persons are already dead before the sentence is read. But this Shamsiddin Kulol is really a saint person...

- What did you say? - Khazret murmured unpleasantly.

Karasakal bit his lips and did not answer as not hearing his brother.

- I hope that his pilgrimage to Mecca will be the last one and then God calls him to the skies.

- Let it be, let it be. - Khazret nodded agreeably.

His brother winced swallowing spittle; he remembered Taragay and his son. Licking his lips, he said uncertainly:

- My subordinate people are complaining on Temur.

- What did that one do? - Khazret asked scornfully.

- That young lad made such broth that my valiant warriors could not put things right.

- That young? - The shoulders of Ubaidullo trembled out of laughing and he laughed up to tears. Relaxed and coughed, the saint shook his hands: - Well, my dear brother you bored me up with the fairytales about young suckers. You probably forgot about your position and moan as a small boy.

Ubaimirzo breathed hardly out of offence. He was eager to tell about the tricks of young Bekk, but understood that Ubaidullo will not listen to him and only make fun of him. Karasakal said with hatred:

- I will execute Taragay's son anyhow.

- On, no, not now. - Khazret whispered. - Great changes will take place soon. Taragay had already been in the palace, and he was offered a position of mingboshi. Amir Kazagon is taking his son-in-law for service again. You should know that if something happens to Temur, you will come out the worse for it. You should better not show your initiative but obey my orders. - After drinking the last drops of the pomegranate juice Ubaidullo said angrily: - We will get Taragay sooner. He and his saint father Shamsiddin Kulol are as a bone in my throat! That is why it is not easy to say whose enemy he is more: mine or yours. - After nervous speaking his forehead was sweat. - That's all, my accomplice and my time is up, - I must meet Amir Kazagon in Baldjyan city. Don't forget to put food for the way... Well... if you talk secretly or write private letters - don't mention my name anywhere. Everything must be done by hints, and you should be careful, as well.

- I see, brother. - Ubaimirzo answered with a dim smile.

There were a lot of guests invited to grandee Ubaimirzo. The first was Davlat-Bukiy, head of finance with his small suite. He was one of few persons who remained after Kazagon Sulton-khan and succeeded to move to Kazangon's in time. A powerful vazir was pale and often drank sherbet. Scratching his thick nose and licking his dry lips, he said with concern:

- I have sugar caused illness...

A fishmonger Nadjar asked with interested.

- How did you know about this disease?

A fat, pale-rosey face of vazir curved with smile.

- Remember our famous scientist - doctor Ibn-Sino.

- And what are you speaking about concretely? - Nadjar asked curiously.

- I took two cups with urine - one was mine and another - of my servant. I hope, that the guests forgive me for these details, - when he saw the interest of audience, he went on with his story, - and put them on the hottest place. Flies sat on my cup at once. The lot of sugar attracted the flies. That is a diagnosis.

Ubaimirzo entered the room and smiled effulgently greeting the guest:

- Till Ali Jura Jury hasn't come yet you can enjoy water chestnut - he stays at Abuka Kauchina longer.

- Venerable, you know your guests taste well. -Vahid, the chief of shikhna - a watch guard of a khan headquarters rewarded the host with a smile. - It is a divine pleasure. Let's enjoy and take pleasure. He threw a handful of sweet almonds and pistachio, Vahid took the water chestnut from one of the servants.

- This is not all, - Karasakal announced proudly, - Pilaf is being cooked from sesame oil with tail fat and with meat of a black sheep.

- Why of the black one? -Amir Tugluk-Temur, the son-in-law of Kazagon-khan asked with interest.

- I'm glad to answer, - the host said, - the black animals take in the sun-rays more that is why their meat is very nourishing and healthy. Then he added: - shashlik is marinaded in ten-year old wine with spices and ground hemp...

The servants brought a brazier with garmala and began to fumigate the guests with aromatic smoke. The joyful music played, and the girls in thin decorated silky dresses appeared. They danced a snake dance. Twelve dancing girls, curving graciously, showed snakes' dance and a queen-snake in the centre with scales of golden threads coiled. The other girls in gauzy dhoti belts and with hair loosened as a horse mane and with fixed artificial long tails changed the young girls. They performed the dance of mares. Davlat-Buky, watching one of them became sorry and his eyes were glancing at

the squares of the carpet, looking like a chess-board. A powerful vazir was recollecting his beloved Ulbegim whispering her name... Vahid saw this and bowing to Hoja Hasan Div whispered:

- You see, our main grandee began to ramble...

Hearing that whisper, Davlat-Buky got angry. His heavy eyelids covered big sad eyes. Boiling with anger he gazed at the head of the guard and asked angrily:

- Where is a promised head of escaped slave Ortik? You spent the time running after him for nothing!

Vahid became confused of these words, his face got pale.

- Let me say, venerable, we didn't find him yet, we just found out the information... And I myself began to act quite recently..

- No, I don't let you! - Davlat-Buky interrupted the head of guard. - You wasted a lot of time, people and money. - Minister of finance looked at Karasakal meaningly and asked:

- What is the direct chief doing by the way?

In a meanwhile Vahid came to sense.

"Some of our people betray... How he could manage to know such detailed information? Oh, my God, traitors are everywhere! - Vahid thought.

- And what about Taragay? - The host was interested trying to relax the stressed tone of talking and make it more peaceful.

- Taragay, - Davlat-Buky pronounced and stopped suddenly as being struck against invisible wall, thought a little and went on: - It is known that Taragay is taking the lead now and we are not able to do anything against him openly, in addition his father-in-law amir Kazagon regards him with favor.

The guests got quiet, imagining what the ruler could do if he was informed about the actions against his favourites.

Davlat-Buky wrinkled up his forehead and his face twinkled.

Nadjar lowered his voice with confusion and said:

- Temur has stolen two my Russians.

Aladdin keeping silence before screw up his eyes, half rose and said angrily:

- Odious enemy Abbos who killed my sons is serving that young ruler.
Hoja Hasan Div ended his speech thoughtfully:

- If his wings would not be cut he can bite a lot of people.

A powerful vazir curved his lips:

- I think, it is necessary to establish the guilt of Temur in stealing the slaves when a lot of people gather at the court of the Ruler.

- You are quite right! -Vohid croaked gladly.

Davlat Buky smiled:

- It seems to me that young man spoils the mood of many people.

Ubymirzo said meaningfully:

- It's time to cut the claws of that leopard; otherwise he'll tear out everyone who stands on his way.

- Is he really so clever, powerful and prompt? - Powerful vazir asked with doubt.

Karasakal didn't succeed to answer as his servant who served meals announced about the arrival of sheikh Ali Jura from Termez.

- Invite them to the big reception-room, - the host ordered with a firm voice. - We will come with the guests there soon.

After mutual greetings Ali Jura Jury inquired about the health of Hoja Barloss, and wishing good luck to the ruler of Kesh he noticed that the eagle will fly high in the nearest future. Then he added secretly: "I'll send a dispatch with you". Sheikh was disappointed at the absence of Kaykhusrav and requested his brother Kaykobud to pass the best regards to the ruler of Huttolyon.

Kaykobud laughed and exclaimed:

- God is our elder brother and he is always with us...

Sheikh looked at the upstart unpleasantly and began to exhort the Badakhshon ruler:

- People must know that God is single and does not have any friends. He didn't generate anyone and nobody gave birth to him and nobody equals him. He is the first existing since the earliest times, and he is the last who never be. He has a power over all and does not need anything. If he wishes anything, he says: "Let it be!" - And it will be. There is no deity besides

him, he is alive forever and he never sleeps. He grants food but he does not need any. He is alone but does not feel lonely, he has no friends. Years and time do not make him old. They can not influence him as he himself created years and time, day and night, light and darkness, sky and earth and all the creatures in the world. He created land and water and everything inside them, all alive, dead, and constant things! He exists out of space. He mounted a throne though he did not need it; he occupies it as soon as he wishes but not for having a rest like people. He rules the sky and the earth, the land and the water and all creatures and things there. And there is not any ruler except him. And there is not any defender except him. He keeps the people, makes them healthy and ill, alive and dead. But his creatures are weak - angels, messengers, prophets and any others. He is allmighty due to his force and he exists forever due to his knowledge. He is eternal and inconceivable...

Kaykubod kissed the hand of the sheikh contritely. Sheikh read a prayer being well-disposed and the feast began. Ali Jura didn't want to see horse-racing and invited Tugluk-Temur to the secret room. Appraising the merits of his son-in-law, the ruler of Moverannahr, sheikh got sorry suddenly.

- Kazangon's health is rather bad especially after his wound. He often has headaches which make him mad sometimes. The face of Ali Jura Jury became gloomy. If something happens to him then there is no support of his sons. One of them is swindler, lady-lover and lecher; the second is a laid-back chap. We don't see on the throne anybody except you...

Amir Tugluk-Temur got breath hardly and said selecting the words cautiously:

- He is safe and sound, and will live long.

- Well, - sheikh answered. - May be, you are right. Let God help him, - he read a prayer for the Ruler. Finishing it, he said: - Oh my God, give power and health to the ruler of Maverannahr.

At the end of the discussion after sizing up the khan's son-in-law, Ali Jura Jury appraised the Ruler to be on the safe side but he didn't have time to spray poison seeds to the heart of the son-in-law of amir Kazagan. They could grow to dangerous illness - a thirst for power.

A smoky darkness covered a vast golden field. Somewhere at the distance the water murmur, rustle twitting of birds in the bushes, rustle of leaves and merry moos of cows coming back from the pastures back to their stalls were heard.

Returning home on his horse amir Tugluk-Temur was deeply in thoughts, his eyes became dim, his blood boiled, he was dreaming... He thought that really there was nobody besides him, Taragay, to be on the throne. And the health of his son-in-law Kazagan was not very good... And may be...

Tugluk-Temur pondered over these considerations under slow and regular knock of hoofs but his look was attracted with the bird flying in the sky and its flight was strange and interrupted.

Strong gusts of wind pulled about the wings of white-tail eagle. The eagle was wounded mortally in fighting. One of its eyes was pricked, his tail was torn. It flapped its big wings trying to fly high but failed. It fell down like a stone to the grove of the evergreen juniper. The fall was noticed by several black kites. They rushed down to the dead bird. They pecked the warm body of the eagle by their red-brown beaks and tore off the pieces of the fresh meat and tossed their heads proudly. The bloody feast of the black birds began.

Suddenly the wind gathered heavy gray clouds in the sky, and it was covered with the dim haze and only far at a long distance, behind the horizon a small band of clear blue sky was seen reminding the ray of hope...

GLOSSARY

A

Abu Bakr - one of the first followers of Prophet Muhammad.

Aimak - a tribe

Airon - a drink made of sour milk mixed with water.

Aivan - an eminent wooden construction for recreation, usually covered with small blankets and cushions

Aiyar - medieval bulglar belonging to the band of poor people

Aka - respectable addressing to old people

Akvam/aimoq - tribe and a kin

Albasti - evil spirit, can make harm to a child

Alburz - The Kazbek mountain

Ambal - a strong big man

Amir - head of the kin, family, grand Duke

Anasha - hemp

Ar-Rakhom, al-asma al Hunan - are the epithets attributed to Allah by Koran

Arba - a cart with two huge wooden wheels

Arbakash - a coachman

Argamak - a pedigree horse

Askhab - brother-soldier

Atala - a dense soup made of water mixed with flour.

Arlod - young generation

B

Bacha - an errand-boy.

Badakhshon - a region in the south-east of Pamir.

Baghdad - a capital of Arab caliph.

Bahodur - robust hero; Hercules

Bakhshi - a writer.

Balkh - one of the oldest cities and cultural centres of Sast, former capital of Baktria.

Banda - a slave.

Baraka - a spiritual father who lived in Mecca and in 1370 met Temur

Baraka - profit

Barakalla - well-done

Barloss - the name of one of nomadic tribes in Central Asia

Batik - a stick with metal knob

Batiy, Guyaka - the grandchildren of Genghis khan

Begim - "my queen" - addressing a lady

Bekk - the title of feudal lord

Belbog' - a belt for a man robe

Berber - an inhabitant of desert Arabian tribe

Bibi - title of a saint mistress and also added to the Moslem women names

Birodar - sworn brother

Bo'gursak - pieces of dough fried in the oil.

Boivacha - a rich man

Boq'cha - a market garden

Burijon - diminutive addressing the grandmother

Buzapt - a minister

C

Caaba - saint place of Moslems where they read their prayers

Camel - the first mosque was built in the place where the prophet's camel sat

Carnai - a big tube, musical instrument, played during big holidays and was used to mark military victories of the rulers

Chagatoy - the son of Genghis khan

Chakka - sour milk

Chaklik-bakra - a mid-size fish

Chapon - a man robe.

Chekmen - decorated men's wear

Chilim - a device for smoking of opium

Chinor - platan tree

Chiroq - a lamp

Chiroqchi - a village not far from Karshi

Chodir - a tent

Choikhona - a tea-house of Moslems

Chorpoya - planking

Chorgan - horse polo

Chobon - a shepherd

D

Dada - diminutive addressing the father

Daf - a musical instrument.

Dervish - a hermit

Darvoza - a gate

Daryo - a river

Dastur - the chief minister and advisor of the ruler

Dasturkhon - a table-cloth where the meals are served for guests

Devon - ministerial office of khan.

Dinor - a golden coin.

Djabongir - "the ruler of the world" - the title of the chief commander.

Djete - the name of the country which included the Eastern Turkestan and Djungariston

Djida - a tree with green-grey leaves and yellow-red fruits

Djigit - a brave man, usually horse rider

Doira - musical instrument like a tambourine

Doston - a poetry, saying

Duglat - a branch of Chagatay kin.

Dutor - two-stringed musical instrument.

Duvol - earthen fence

F

Farang - European

Fard - a short poem of two lines

Fidoi - a fighter for ideas

G

G'altak - a wooden block

G'azal - a short lyric poem

Gagach - measure of length (5-6 km)

Garm - hot, warm

Gatagan - a beautiful half-bowed sabre with wide blade,

Gaz - a measure of length about 80 sm

Gazel, Ohu - gazelle

Ginduh, Hindukuh - Indian mountains

Gowmuborix - a strong warrior

Great khan - Genghis khan

Gul - in Moslem religion it is a female devil having bad will towards people

Gulistan - a holiday place with flowers

Gulom - young captives trained in military art and serving at the palace

Gur - a man from the Gur mountains not far from Herat.

Guri - a beautiful maiden living in the paradise

H

Hajj - pilgrimage to Mecca

Hakan, kogan - a ruler of the rulers - i.e., a great ruler

Halif Ali - son-in-law and follower of Prophet Muhammad

Hamom - a public bathhouse

Harajat - a land tax

Hashish - opium

Havuz - reservoir, pool

Hasrat - honorable title added to God's name, prophets, imams, famous saints

Hodjailgar - a village close to Shahrisabz mountains.

Hoja - honoured title given only to citizens and clergy persons

Hokim - a ruler of the region

Hujra - a cell in madrasa

Hutallan - the old region in Central Asia

I

Iblis - a spirit of harm, darkness which is mentioned in Koran.

Istor - refreshments in the fixed time of the day and night during religious fast

Ibvon - a brother; real brothers and true friends

Il - a kin

Imam - a spiritual tutor of religious man; the head of religious school; a priest at the mosque

Isbon - a head of Moslem society
Iskandar - Alexander the Great.
Islam - Moslem religion (means: "to give oneself to the will of God")

J

Jairon - a kind of antelope
Jarida - a horse team
Jibox - the place where the knowledge of poetry is studied
Jonim - means: "dear", "darling"
Juma - Friday, the day of Moslem pray

K

Kaif - enjoyment, pleasure
Kaklik - a maintain partridge
Kalandar - wandering dervish-beggar
Kalla-pocha - special dish of boiled head of bull, cow or sheep served for respectable guest
Kalligula - a cup made of a coconut shell
Kamar - a belt
Kamoncha - a big violin with three or four strings
Kampir - an old woman
Kanka - a little boat
Karagach - an elm
Kariz - underground water pass
Karvonboshi - a leader of caravan
Kashgar - the city in the western Turkistan
Katta nyin - feast with dancing

Kaum - a military detachment
Kavushfurushon - a seller of shoes
Kazagon - a prince originating from Genghis khan-kin
Kelya - a room in the mosque; cell
Kesh - Shahrisabz
Ketkhuda - head of the village
Ketmon - a kind of spade for ploughing used in the East
Khabar - news
Khop - agreed; very well
Khonum - addressing the hostess
Khotib - a spritual person reading hutba
Khotun - a respectable name of the married woman
Khudorakhmatli - thanksgiving to God
Khum - a big earthen jug
Khurda - a soup of mung bean and rice served with sour milk
Khurjun - a bag made of carpet cloth placed on the back of horse or camel
Khutba - a preaching of imam at the mosque on Friday
Koran - a holy book of Moslems
Kovurdok - dish cooked with meat, potatoes and onion
Kubravi - Sufi brotherhood in the early 13th century in Khorazm by Nadjaddin al Kubra (1145-1221)
Kulakhfurushon - a seller of head wear

Kulchatoy - a bread baked with adding flour and cut onion

Kulem - measure of length (7-8 km)

Kumch, kuloq - a cone shaped cap

Kumis - milk of horse or camel prepared in a special way

Kurmush - a special kind of scone

Kurpacha - a narrow blanket used for covering the floor

Kurultai - meeting, gathering for considering important problems

Kutvol - the commandant of the castle, city

L

Lashkar - a warrior

M

Madrasa - Moslem high educational institution

Magrib - the old name of the western African country

Maidon - big square

Mais, Kishmish - raisin

Majlis - meeting, discussion

Majnunтол - willow

Maktab - primary school.

Malik - a prince

Mangal - a brazier

Manshur - edict

Makhan - Makhuvan - in old times

Makhan was a name of contemporary Marv

Marv - the ruins of old Marv which are preserved in Turkmenistan.

Maschit - a building for Moslem praying

Maskaraboş - folk rope-walker, a clown

Maverannahr - part of Central Asia located between the Amu-Darya and the Sir-Darya rivers

Mazandaron - a state on the southern shore of the Caspian sea.

Mazor - a cemetery

Mecca - a holy city of pilgrimage

Mehmonkhona - a reception room

Minbar - eminence at the mosque from where the pray is read

Mindera - a cushion for sitting on the floor

Ming - a thousand

Minor - eminent place outside from where the muezzin calls people for praying

Mirza - the chief of the kin

Mogut - an athlete, Hercules

Muezxin - an assistant at the Moslem mosque calling parish for pray

Mukhtasib - an office man watching for observance of the rules of trade

Mullah - educated clergy man with knowledge of Moslem rituals, teacher at religious school

Mumiyo - mummy, "tears of mountains" resinoid curing substance found in the mountains

Murid - a volunteer pupil studying at the stage of being included to Sufi brotherhood

Murshid - a spiritual tutor.

Musallas - grape vine

Muskir - a wine

Mutetarin - a guard of caravan formed of volunteers in the bazaar

Muvaskal - a servant taking care of guests

N

Nakhlchiron - a hunter

Namoz - a five-time pray of Moslems during a day

Nanaga, enaga - a nurse

Nardi - backgammon

Nasaf - contemporary Karshi - city located to the south from Bukhara

Naukar - the warrior in the amir's privy squad

Navrux - spring national holiday, the first day of the Eastern "New year"

Nisha - a place showing the direction of Moslem to Mecca when praying

Noib - a spiritual chief of the region

Noyon - a prince.

O

Oglan - the title of the member of Genghis khan's kin but without a throne

Oisha - beloved wife of Prophet Muhammad

Okbund - a title of scientists

Olim - a scientist

Opa - elder sister, aunt

Oshkbona - dining-room, canteen

Oshpax - a cook

P

Pakhlovon - warrior, athlete

Pakhsa - earthen bricks

Palitsa - a club - kind of primitive armament

Panj - five (Persian origin)

Pari - a fantastic creature in the image of pretty woman

Patir - puff scone

Pazvant - a guard

Phition - youth unit

Pichak - a special type of pie with spring grasses

Pichoq - a knife

Pir - an old man, spiritual leader or tutor

Pustin - a fur-coat

Q

Qadria - a Sufi brotherhood at the end of the 13th century

Qaimak - sour cream.
Qalim - a ransom for a bride
Qalpoq - a skullcap
Qamcha - a lash
Qaraul beki - a head of guard
Qasida - one of the wide-spread genre of the eastern poetry.
Qasos - revenge
Qassob - a butcher
Qatlama - puff-scones
Qator - a caravan
Qazi - a horse sausage
Qazon - a cauldron
Qibla - place showing direction to Mecca when Moslem is praying
Qishloq - a countryside, village
Qizil gul - a red flower
Qo'chkar - a ram
Qora bulut - a black cloud
Qorasuv - dark water
Qorzi - a court man
Qurultay - gathering, meeting at which the highest military officials elect a new khan
Qurut - white balls made of dried sour milk

R

Rabad - outer city
Rais - a city leader
Rakaat - a number of pray acts and movements composing the base of Moslem pray. Each pray includes 2-4 rakaats

Ramazon - the ninth month of Moslem moon calendar, a month of fasting
Rubob - a musical stringed instrument
Ruboi - a form of eastern poetry of four lines
Rum - Byzantine
Rumi - Byzantinesque

S

Sadakchi - an archer
Sadr - a minister
Dastur - a minister
Saigak - a kind of steppe antelope
Saksaul - a kind of desert and steppe plant of Central Asia, can be used as firewood
Salom alaikum - a greeting which means: "Peace to your home"
Santi-kanaat - a stone with holes carried in the belt.
Saraton - the hottest month of summer
Sarbador - volunteer-warrior ready to die
Sarbar - a warrior, guard
Sardoba - special device for collecting and keeping of rain and melt water
Sarhang - the head of the squad of 200-300 cavalrymen

Sarpo - a traditional present for the bride and groom's relatives

Sarraf - a bank for putting and received money; merchants could get money by the bank check

Satarvin - a woman who can not give birth to a child

Say Hun - the Sirdarya river in Uzbekistan

Sayil - religious holiday: Ramadan-hait, Kurbon-hait holidays

Seiston - a large region in the eastern part of Iran

Shahar - city

Shahrisabz - Green city, a city of green grass

Shaiton - a devil

Shakh - the king

Shamol - wind

Shariat - code of the Moslem laws

Sharmand - a strong man

Shash - former name of Tashkent

Sheikh - an old clergy supervisor

Shogirt - a pupil, student

Sinakhsa - military leader

Soft - a pupil of the madrassa

Soy - a dried river

Sufa - a wooden planking for sitting and recreation

Sufi - a Sufi follower; Sufi is a mystic philosophy of Islam, appeared in the 9th century

Sunna - custom, example; a messenger of God; a pattern of Muhammad life

Sunnat - circumcision

Supa - earthen hill in the yard

Sura - adage of Koran

Surnai - sacred musical instrument in the shape of clarinet

Suyunchi - a present for a good news; it is usually the event of a child birth

T

Tabib - a doctor, healer

Tabriz, Tavriz - a big beautiful city in the northern part of Iran

Tadjin - a great prince.

Tadjir - respectable, representative merchant

Taizi - a kind of dog

Tandir - a special oven for baking scones and somsa

Tandir-kabob - pieces of meat cooked in a special oven and covered with wooden branches

Taqsir - Mister, sir

Tarmashirin Khan - the ruler of Chagatoi khan 1326-1334

Tashakeur - a thanking

Tashuru - to move

Tesba - a little plough

Tim - caravan shed

Tosh - a stone

Tul - a widower

Tulpor - a rider, a quick horse

Tumor - amulet, talisman

Tung'ix - a swine

Tup - a dust-peck

Turon - the old name of Central Asia; the country lying to the south-east of the Amu-Darya

Turgand - bodyguard

Turk - the tribes occupied the lands of Central Asia, Eastern China, Northern India in Middle Ages

Turkistan - the old country of Turkic people. The cities Shash-Tashkent, Bukhara were called like this at first

Tursak - a goatskin

Tusak - a two-year old sheep

Tut - a mulberry tree

Tuy - wedding-party

U

Ugadey - the son of Genghis khan

Ukamo - a representative of high Moslem clergy

Ulus - region, province

Umurtka - fried eggs with meat

Un-osh - a noodle soup

Urda - horde

Urt - a camp, residence

Usto - a master

V

Vabo - epidemy of plague in 1338-1339

Vakuf - property, profit what merchants could spend for thanksgiving

Vaxir - a minister

Viloyat - a province

Y

Yakhna-gusht - cold boiled meat

Yakbob - a jug with water and ice

Yasovul - an officer of special business

Yuragan - the son-in-law of khan

Yurta - a living place of nomads

Yuzaskar - hundred soldiers

Z

Zargar - a jeweller

Zikr - a special type of pray of dervishes with repeating of pray basic words

Zindon - underground prison

Ziyorat - a pray bowing

CONTENTS

From the author.....	3
Rulers' birth	4
Amir Taragay	19
Shamsiddin Kulol - the spiritual father of Taragay	29
Childhood of Temur	36
Islam - in its Mightiness, Power and Immortality	49
Young Bekk	58
Hostility of Sheikhs	81
Manhood	95
Temur is in Samarkand	138
Pathsways	172
After the dark night a bright dawn comes	186
The Sarbadors	209
Unexpected danger	250
Wedding	274
Intention of enemies	291
GLOSSARY	303

Tahir Julmatov
YOUNG TEMUR

Editor *I. Maslovskaya*
Designer *A. Fazilov*
Computer page proof *D. Tsipushkina*

IB № 106

Allowed for publishing on 14.10.09. Format 60x84 $\frac{1}{16}$ Printer's sheet 19,625.
Circulation 1000 copies. Contract № 168. Order № 218

«ART FLEX» Publishing House, 2009.
100129, Tashkent, 30, Navoi str.

Printed in «NISIM».
100017, Tashkent, C-5, 71, Sh. Rashidov str.
