

Pilot, Author, Poet, Artist  
Akram Monfared Arya  
(Taraneh)

Anahita

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# Anahita

Based on a true story



Presentation  
Akram Monfared-Arya



I can be booked for public speaking  
E-mail: [arya@arya.se](mailto:arya@arya.se)

Would you like to know more about me? Visit my website:  
<http://www.arya.se>

I am a member of the Swedish Writers' Association,  
Also a member of Sweden's General Art Association..

- Iran's first female pilot with private license
- Author
- Poet – with eleven books
- Artist with 60 paintings and many exhibitions

I was born in Tehran in 1946 and was regarded one of the most active Iranian women.

In 1974, while married, I took up my studies.

At the same time, I started taking flying lessons. I succeeded in the foregoing despite my role as a housewife and mother of five children.

I started my flight training in engineless planes (gliders) at Airo Club at Doshan-Tapeh School of Flight and after receiving my certificate, I continued training on one and two-engine planes at Ghaleh-Morghi.

After obtaining my second pilot license, I continued flying till 1979, when I was not able to pursue further training as a result of the revolution in Iran.

I am the first female pilot of Iran after Princess Fatemeh Pahlavi.

Alongside my efforts to become a pilot, I worked as the Director of Training and Consultant for two insurance companies: Tehran Insurance Company and Iran-America Insurance Company.

To prove women's capabilities and their equality to that of their male counterparts, I took driving lessons on trucks and buses.

Shortly after the revolution, I left Iran with my children and immigrated to Sweden.

Despite being a single-parent, I managed to open and run a little restaurant in Jönköping while continuing on raising my children, who are successful and have their own families now.

A new chapter of my life began in 1998 when I put together a collection of my romantic poems and short stories, which I had started writing since 1972, and published them.

My first book called "PEJVAK-E ESHQ" (in English "The messenger of love") was published in April 1999 in Sweden. "PEJVAK-E ESHQ" is a book about separation, homeland, expatriation and women's political rights but ultimately it is also about love.

Published in 2000, my second book, "Sargozashteh Pari" (in English "Pari's life") is based on women's subjugation in patriarchal societies.

I won the second prize in literary event called "Mina drömmars Kista" arranged by Kista district in 2000.

A year later, I won the first prize in poetry contest in "Husby Poesi-cup."

I have actively participated in Swedish literary events called "Poetry Slam" since 1999. I have been appointed the Master of Ceremony for Poetry Slam in 2001.

I was the organizer and coordinator for poetry meetings at the library of Skärholmens for eight months from September 2001.

I have even participated in poetry event called "Poetry Slam" in New York in February 2001 where my poems were well received.

In May 2001, I got permission from Sara Lidman to translate one of her books to Persian.

I chaired the International Authors Union of Sweden from 2003 to 2006.

In year 2001, I was selected as a candidate in the Social Democratic Party to run for parliament and city hall for the 2002 election.

I began my artistic career in 2007.

I was always fascinated by nature, the mountains with the white glacier at the top and their mysterious features, the secretive deep blue sea, the foam on wave peaks and the sound of waves brushing against the beach, the velvety black sky full of silver stars and beautiful autumn-coloured trees, white clothes trees in the winter and rainbow colors shimmering gloriously in the sky when sunlight is broken into raindrops.

My primary theme in my paintings is the situation of women in the world.

In July 2007, on the occasion of the celebration of Linnaeus' 300 year anniversary, I was invited to Jokkmokk and Kvikkjokk along with seven other artists.

The paintings which were painted as tributes to Linnaeus were presented to Jokkmokk Municipality. I also held my first joint exhibition along with seven artists in Kvikkjokk in July 2007. In January 2008, I held a second joint exhibition in Husby Arts Hall.

In July 2008, I launched my first individual exhibition at Gallery Kocks in Stockholm with a total of 52 paintings done in oil, acrylic, watercolour, and charcoal, on canvas or paper.

## **Other works by Akram Monfared Arya:**

Flykten från helvetet i Iran till paradiset Sverige (trans. Escape from hell in Iran to paradise Sweden) (2008) Swedish novel

Anahita (2007) Swedish novel

A song of love (2006) English

Himlen har inga gränser (trans. The sky has no limits) (2005) Swedish

Brinnande hjärta, Invandrarförlaget (trans. Burning Heart) (2004) Swedish and English

Shaparakha deltange parvaz dar baghand (trans. Butterflies long to fly in garden) (2003) Persian

Den tomma ramen (trans. The Empty Frame) (2003) Swedish and English

Livets väg (Återkomst till livet) (trans. Life's path (Return to Life)) (2002) Swedish

Vargatider (trans. Hard times) (2001) Swedish

Tame tanhai va ghorbat (trans. The taste of loneliness and exile) (2001) Persian

Sargozashte Pary (trans. Pary's Fate) (2000) Persian novel

Pejvak-e Eshq (trans. Love's Echo) (1999) Persian and English

### **Contributions to:**

Kista antologin, (Kista anthology) Kista stadsdelsförvaltning (2002)

“Tillvarons puzzel - Karriärval och livsmål” (trans. "Puzzle life – career choice & life goal") by Ebba Laurin (2004)

Kvinnors liv i Husby. En skildring av kön, plats och etnicitet av fil.dr Carina Listerborn (trans. Women's life in Husby) by Lunds University (2005)

POETRY online by Författares Bokmaskin (2006)

To my family  
specially my son Ali,  
Thanks for the collaboration, dear son



## **My sorrow**

If you knew my grief  
had you already lost your sympathy  
for decades, I had it.  
Except patience, not much can be done.  
God knows why this is the case for me.  
What sin have I committed that I deserve this?  
For this has made my life dark  
and my destiny has got its punishment.  
Nothing to do but just to fight,  
and ask for improvement and resolve.

From my book Sky has no limits (2005)



**Anahita** was from a middle class family. She was born April 12 1965, a little sweet girl who had come to a cruel world. On the surface, the family appeared to be middle-class, average folks. The father, a big man, one-hundred-seventy centimeter long, weighing ninety-two kilogram, is a retired military member who in his young days did not do better than to skip high school and join the army, where he could not reach a higher rank than sergeant after thirty-five years of service. Chingiz was his name. A name which came to be associated with shame for the family as he got older.

He has big brown eyes, dark brown hair, large and thick eyebrows, big and fleshy nose with large nostrils through which he could spurt fire like a dragon, thick lips, and yellow teeth caused by chain-smoking. His short and thick neck was rather problematic for him.

His size is extra large but because of the neck he must wear extra, extra large, or he cannot button up the collar on the shirt.

The comical features of Chingiz are his big feet. Size forty-seven for a man who is a hundred-and-seventy centimeters long makes him something of a caricature.

Chingiz was a controlling and an aggressive man. The reasons for this were that he was a teenager when he lost his father, and when life gave him the heavy burden of caring for and supporting his family.

His few, pitiful relatives did not make things easier either. Chingiz's uncle, Hassan, was an alcoholic and a womanizer. Everyone in the family knew about Hassan's relationship with prostitutes.

The death of the father brought Chingiz closer to Hassan. Chingiz's mother, Effat, was too old and sick to be able to prevent this diabolical friendship and end it immediately. This led to Chingiz coming in contact with people from all walks of life. Contact with women of all ages was something

that led Chingiz down different paths in life.

Since Chingiz had a younger brother and a younger sister, he was badly compelled to control himself for the sake of supporting them, and, in following his uncle's footsteps, he had become an alcohol abuser.

Fortunately for Chingiz though, drinking was not permitted in the military. For Chingiz, this was a difficult pill to swallow but he could live with it so long as he could still meet his friends, the whores.

Life was not easy for Chingiz. At the age of twenty, he got a taste of fatherhood while at same time and on top of everything else, his mother and his father were both gone to God's kingdom.

Effat died of shock over the fact that his eldest son made a child with a middle-aged prostitute.

This was what fate had in store for Effat, to have her first grandchild born a bastard by a whore.

Not much mattered to Chingiz anymore. For him, the only things in life that mattered the most were: food, women, leisure and relaxation.

However, with the mother's passing, Chingiz's uncle, Hassan, become his siblings' guardian; something that only made Chingiz delighted and not his siblings.

His brother, Parviz, and his sister, Leila, had no say in the matter.

They were victims of circumstances.

Chingiz, who now had a boy, had no plans to take responsibility for that little innocent creature who had the misfortune of ending up in such family. Chingiz only showed up at the brothel when the baby was being delivered, and he raced out of there as soon as the baby was born. The little boy was named Sam after his grandfather.

Chingiz did not enjoy getting attached to anything or anyone

and had no desire to be tied down by any sense of responsibility. He loved his freedom. His egocentricity was very much one of his many negative characteristics.

His lust landed him in a world of shame and indiscretion.

The fact that Chingiz had not seen much of a father figure in his life and had not experienced any parental love had made him oblivious to the significance of such factors in one's life and had rendered him incapable of loving others.

Chingiz's fate was to be raised by his uncle; a man whose life comprised of nothing more than alcohol and sex with prostitutes.

In addition to being a lousy father, Chingiz was a lousy lover. Sex for him meant self-gratification and nothing else. As a result of his frequent interactions with whores, he could not understand the difference between sex and love, pretence and romance.

This came to haunt him later on in life. A man whose life did not contain anything positive. Working like a horse and living like a pig was all that Chingiz's life was about.

He was not a popular person among his colleagues. He was vulgar and boorish. Maybe deep down inside, he was a kind and decent person, but that softer side of him never got to manifest itself, because of his miserable upbringing.

At the age of twenty-five, Chingiz was forced into marriage with a girl his own age. He had to marry her since he slept with her and took her virginity.

Kobra was the girl's name. A young girl, thin as a toothpick, ugly as a hyena, with short black curly hair.

Her big black eyes scared the life out of any living being who happened to stare into them. Kobra, a wicked and evil girl, who dabbled in sorcery and witchcraft. A girl with satanic thoughts and deeds.

This was a death sentence for Chingiz to be forced into

marriage. He was not free anymore. Particularly now that he was also stuck with raising Sam whose mother married a wealthy client of hers and left the brothel.

Poor Sam had to grow up with her wicked stepmother and his dim-witted father.

Kobra forced Sam to slavery at home. Sam had to wash, scrub, dust, shop and all in all he had to toil at home like a faithful servant to Kobra.

Chingiz, who did not care about either Sam or Kobra, did not wait too long to go back to the brothel and to his whores again.

Chingiz was like an animal in his mannerism and in relation to other people. He had no respect for anyone or anything. All he cared about was his own pleasure.

In spite of all this, Kobra tried to hold on to Chingiz anyway she could.

Kobra was a cruel woman, but she had to be like that. She had no chance of surviving Chingiz if she had not been as mean as she was.

Years go by and there are no hopes of life getting better with Chingiz. Not even having children made Chingiz settle down. Chingiz often suffered from some sort of venereal disease that he contracted from prostitutes, and which he kept passing on to Kobra. Ultimately, Kobra's worst nightmare came true when she found out that she had cervical cancer. She had to undergo full hysterectomy, which meant that she could not have any more children.

At that time, Kobra had three children. A boy called Saaid, a girl named Sara, and a stepson, Sam. She loved her son and her daughter but she absolutely hated her stepson.

For her, Sam was a constant reminder of Chingiz's hideous side and the kind of monster that he was. Sam was a disgrace to her, and yet she was stuck with raising him.

Saaid and Sara were the apples of her eyes. They had it good. Whatever Chingiz earned, Kobra got to spend on Saaid and Sara. But Sam had to fend for himself.

As early as age thirteen, Sam had to work, selling fruits in the bazaar, and he had to hand over his earnings to Kobra.

Kobra had two sources of income: Chingiz and Sam.

Kobra's family belonged to the working class. But they were a close-knit family and they watched each other's back.

Therefore Kobra could rely on her family and count on their support. It was, after all, thanks to her relatives' intervention that Chingiz was forced into marrying her after sleeping with her and taking her virginity.

Chingiz's insatiable appetite for women got him entangled in the web of marriage. But since Chingiz had a big mouth and a very nasty attitude, he managed to avoid seeing Kobra's family and to stay away from them.

Ever since Kobra's hysterectomy, Chingiz had started to constantly nag her about it and complain that she had lost her ability to satisfy him, though this was a pure lie.

Kobra had severe infection after surgery so for her having intercourse was absolutely out of the question.

So Kobra tried to keep Chingiz in her shattered life by means of hiring domestic help and allowing Chingiz to flirt with them and have fun. She also continued to pour in Chingiz all possible mixtures and potions in the hopes of keeping him under her spell and stopping him from thinking of a new marriage.

All her efforts were in vain. The only effect they had was just to delay the inevitable. Delay the process until it became someone else's bad luck to fall into the hands of Chingiz.

The years came and went. Sam, Saaid, and Sara were adults now. Sam, who had not had the chance to do much schooling, took control of his life now and began working in the day and studying in the evenings.

By then, he was thirty years old. The age difference was not much between Saaid (twenty-two), Sara (twenty), and Sam (thirty).

Although Kobra had been cruel to Sam and fate had not been any better to him either, Sam got to manage himself well in his adult life.

But Kobra's cruelty extended well beyond enslaving Sam in his childhood. Her greatest cruelty was the life-long pain she inflicted on him when she had him sterilized.

Kobra had taken Sam to a doctor many years back and had put the poor kid through a vasectomy.

But Sam had no way of knowing about this until after his marriage when he began to wonder why his wife could not become pregnant. Sam married at the age of thirty-one.

He was now a civil servant working at the municipality. He also succeeded in completing his studies and getting a degree at the age of forty. His wife was a hairdresser. He had it much better than what Chingiz could give him.

Sam tried to break contact with his father on several occasions. But he had no one else but him.

Sam was a sensitive man who missed his mother and his father very much. He could not have children of his own to whom he could give his full fatherly love . . . He had no real parents. The only one he had now was his beloved wife. He cherished his wife and highly valued his marriage.

To find peace in life, Sam adopted a girl from a foster home. He loved her as she was his own. He did everything to give his wife and their child a good and decent life, unlike the one he had experienced for so long.

Chingiz's life went as normal, without meaning and significance.

Kobra had managed to raise her children and support them until they finished their schooling and got their lives together. Kobra had aged prematurely because of Chingiz. She and

Chingiz were almost the same age.  
Now Chingiz was sixty years old, but he was still just as bad  
as he was before.

## **Who was Chingiz? Why was he really the way he was?**

He came originally from a wealthy family. But a family that had no structure in life. Chingiz's father, Karim, married Effat when he was sixty years old.

A businessman who earned his living by lending money. He was a lender who took people's property such as their land or homes as collateral.

Chingiz's mother was much younger than his father. The age difference between them was more than forty five years. So Effat was fifteen when she married Chingiz's father Karim. Karim died when Chingiz was fourteen years old and he died due to an illness. Chingiz's sister, Laila, got married at fifteen, just like her mother, and she died in an accident a few years later. Parviz, Chingiz's brother, joined the military in his teens in the hopes of finding happiness there, something that Chingiz had failed to do. Parviz broke all contacts with Chingiz since then.

Chingiz could already be considered an orphan in his teens. Effat was too young to be able to raise her children. Her brother, who was eight years older, was the only one she had who could take care of them.

Nobody saw a nickel of all that money that Chingiz's father lent out to people. His children were so young that they could not claim and recover their father's fortune. All they got as inheritance was the house they lived in with all its furniture and a small amount of cash.

It seemed as if stupidity was a hereditary problem within the family.

Who would be stupid enough to lend money without writing a real and formal contract? Well, contracts did exist but no one knew where they were. These documents were found twenty years later, thanks to Parviz's persistence, but they were obsolete and outdated.

The contracts were no longer valid and could not be used to

re-claim what once belonged to a few small children and a young mother. There are such things that affect one to become good or evil.

Chingiz and Kobra were alone now. Their children had their own lives to live. Even Sam had managed to make a good life for himself.

But Chingiz is Chingiz, just as horny and immature as if he is still sixteen years old. He has retired from the military. But he is just sixty-five years old. He is accustomed to working, working and working. He cannot be idle the same way that he cannot be without women and sex.

So he gets a job in the bazaar working as a shoe salesman in a friend's store.

During these years Kobra had assumed that the dream of a new marriage was over for Chingiz. She thought he was now so old that he could not even imagine getting married any more. Kobra was aware of Chingiz's animalistic sexual appetite. She could turn a blind eye on the affairs he had with other women, but what she could not accept was him marrying a new wife.

But history repeats itself. Chingiz works in the bazaar. A place where many come and go. A place where people come to buy things including shoes.

That is where he meets his new victim for his satanic ritual, marriage.

On a beautiful summer day, a young fifteen-year-old girl goes out shopping. She is a hundred and sixty five centimeters long with long, light-brown hair, light-brown eyes, and great body. She is wearing a red dress with floral pattern, small yellow and white flowers, and a pair of white shoes. She is looking to buy a new pair of shoes. She lives near the bazaar where fate had set up its trap.

Her name is Ziba.

Ziba's father, Akbar, is a carpenter. Her mother, Homa, is a simple housewife. Ziba lives with her parents, grandmother, Esmat, and her little brother, Kyvan.

Ziba comes from a decent family. She has simple values in life. She has recently finished grade eight with good grades. It is in the middle of summer. She enjoys the same things as other girls her age would: getting together with friends, developing closer relationship with her mother, having crushes on boys, and all other things that a teenage girl would normally find interesting at that age.

As soon as Chingiz lays eye on Ziba, he falls deeply in love with her. He does not care about the age difference. The fact that she is so young. That she could be his grandchild. No, he falls for her.

Ziba has no idea what fate has in store for her. She buys her shoes and leaves the store. But Chingiz leaves the store to his colleague and follows her. He tries to chat with her, be funny and wise. She is not at all interested in him. Chingiz follows her home. He is madly in love. Ziba says nothing about that to her parents. She does not want to make trouble.

Ziba was in love with one of her second-cousins, Saman. Ziba had her dreams about her wedding day and her life with Saman. She had been in love with him for few years.

Fate had no intentions of allowing Ziba and Saman to get married. It was not meant for them to be together.

Chingiz was a weird type. He had the audacity to come visit

Ziba's family and try to persuade them that he is the best choice for Ziba.

Ziba's father could not believe that such an old man would have the guts to come and propose marriage to such a young girl. But no one can fight against his or her destiny.

One day when Ziba, her parents, and a number of their relatives were guests at Saman's family, Ziba discovered something horrible, something that changed her life. She saw, by accident, Saman kissing a girl in the family when she went to get something from the storage room.

It broke her heart. It was as if her life had ended. She felt a sudden heat through her body as blood rushed through her veins. She was in disbelief; she closed her eyes for a moment hoping that she was mistaken, but unfortunately, that was not the case.

Now it is over. Ziba is stubborn and resentful. She would gladly destroy her life by not forgiving and forgetting. Now, Saman no longer exists for her.

Now all her dreams are expunged from both her short and long-term memory.

There is no mentioning of Saman's name ever again.

To get revenge from Saman, Ziba decides to marry her pathetic admirer.

Yes, she is willing to destroy her life over revenge, if that can be called revenge. To get revenge from whom, herself? How dumb and stupid can one be?

Saman tried to speak with her but had no success. She did not want anything to do with him anymore.

Chingiz has still not given up and tries to keep in touch with Ziba's family. Yet Kobra knows nothing of what Chingiz is up to. She could never imagine that Chingiz would fall in love with a teenager. And Chingiz never mentions what he does when he is out. As far as Kobra was concerned, Chingiz was as usual busy with the whores and nothing else.

She is not bothered by such despicable affairs since they do not pose any real threat to her marriage. Kobra and Chingiz had long ceased being intimate.

Kobra was not a bit concerned about it. She was just happy to have Chingiz as her husband even if it was only on paper.

Ziba started now hinting to her father that she might be interested in marrying Chingiz. She dared not say that so openly and clearly, for then the father would burst into anger. Therefore Ziba would sneak out to visit Chingiz at his workplace.

Ziba was too young and inexperienced to realize what she was doing to her own life.

She visited Chingiz a few times and made him more convinced to try to get her family's blessing for marriage. Ziba could not go out with Chingiz, but she could go to the bazaar and visit him at work. They did not talk much during the few occasions they met. But Chingiz had made headway. Ironically, when one is determined to wreck his or her life, fate seals the deal with bringing about all kinds of misfortune and calamity.

Ziba's grandmother suffers a heart attack and dies suddenly, while Ziba's father gets laid off and becomes unemployed. A simple family living in a flat, which is rented and not their own, without any savings, now face a difficult living situation.

How will they pay the rent? How will the funeral costs be paid? And a host of new issues that come up.

The first thing the family did was to sell their gold and some of their carpets, while the father desperately searched for a job. A simple carpenter who had no other skills, no education, and to top it off, was now also old and worn out. But that was not the reason he was laid off.

He had no permanent employment. Throughout his life he

had worked on casual basis here and there. Now he had no pension, no savings, and no work.

While the family tried to survive, Chingiz showed up over and over in their lives. Chingiz got wind of their economic situation. This was good news for him. This gave him the upper hand. Now he was no longer just someone with a marriage proposal but also one who could play the role of a guardian angel. He could lure them with a lot of promises to get what he wanted.

Chingiz offered to help the family. He had little savings so he could not provide great financial help. But he promised Ziba's father that he would ask his friends with whom he worked to find him a job.

It was tough times for Ziba and her family. For Ziba it seemed that all the problems in the world had hit them at once. On the one hand, Ziba was betrayed by the love of her life and on the other hand, her family was on the brink of bankruptcy.

Ziba was devastated by Saman's cheating heart and she was bent on revenge from him who had stabbed her in the back. Ziba had destroyed much of her life over the years on the account of her pig-headedness and bitterness.

Now it was a golden opportunity for Chingiz to strike. The road was clear. It was all coming together.

As Kobra was not able to perform her conjugal duty because of her severe venereal disease with which Chingiz had infected her, Chingiz could without permission from Kobra and with the backing of the law enter into a marriage again and have two wives.

So nothing could stop him from committing such unjust act. An act that would only benefit him. An act that would ruin the life of a young teenager.

Puberty had damaged Ziba's brain so much that she would consciously dare delve into the depth of hell.

Ziba's father, who had been dealt a rotten hand in life, was tempted by Chingiz's diabolical and colorful offerings, and allowed his daughter to enter into such terrible marriage.

Ziba's mother could not comment on anything since the father made all the decisions for everything.

As Ziba had given her consent to this, there were no longer any obstacles for them to become engaged and set a date for the wedding ceremony.

Chingiz bought a cheap engagement ring. He visited the family in an afternoon and unbeknown to the rest of relatives on both sides, the engagement took place.

Ziba could not keep this as a secret. She wanted revenge on her "former" beloved Saman. Therefore she openly wore her engagement ring all the time. She went on showing off her cheap, simple, metal ring to friends and relatives.

Saman found out about the engagement; that was the plan all along. He met her after making some bold attempts. He tried to reason with her but to no avail. He wanted to get her to understand that this would end up hurting her more than anyone else. He asked for forgiveness. He knelt before her and asked her not to marry an old man, that even if she no longer wanted him, there was no need for her to ruin her life like that.

But when one's life is meant to be destroyed, even God seems to be unwilling to stop that.

During the short engagement period of one month Chingiz was an angel. He was happy and rejuvenated. They went out to movies and restaurants. He helped the family with their rent and other matters. He was courteous and behaved like a gentleman.

So far, neither Ziba's family nor Kobra knew about each other's existence.

No, Chingiz never told Ziba that he was married. He also kept Kobra in the dark about his plans to marry Ziba.

Everything was hunky-dory for Chingiz. Nothing worried him. He had no conscience to feel agony or compassion. There was only one thing he was concerned with and that was his own satisfaction, period.

Deep down Ziba knew nothing of Chingiz. He was her revenge casualty, although in this case it was she who was the casualty, the one whose future was sacrificed.

Engagement period went fast and the wedding day arrived. During that time Chingiz managed to convince Ziba's family to have a private ceremony at home instead of having a big wedding.

Since Ziba's father was not proud of this marriage, and he wanted to keep it as low key as possible, only the closest relatives were invited to this lovely celebration.

Meanwhile, Chingiz rented a studio in the suburbs and acquired simple household items for his new life with Ziba. The same night, after the simple ceremony, Ziba, the willful teenager, separated from her family and went to her new so-called home.

That evening Chingiz had had a few shots of whiskey to help him relax and perform later in bed. He was surely, not a young man anymore but he had a hard time accepting that. That was why he entered into such marriage. Poor Ziba! Whiskey did not help that night. Wedding night became a nightmare for Ziba. Chingiz could not get aroused. And finally, after going through a lot of trouble he managed to get an arousal. That did not last long and he had to stop half-way through.

Since some men are nothing more than pigs, like Chingiz was, he put the blame on Ziba for his own shortcoming. He even claimed that she was not a virgin and that she must have had sex before.

Ziba wept like a scared child. She was shocked. First she did not understand a word of what Chingiz was talking about,

and then when she tried to speak, she got a fierce slap in the face from him. In the small one-room flat, Ziba sat on the floor and cried out of despair.

She had no way out. She could not go back to her parents. For her it seemed as if they were dead. They were no longer there to support her.

Chingiz, who was drunk that night, fell sleep after a while. Ziba did not close her eyes for a minute that night. She kept thinking about everything. About the life she had before. About how pathetic her life was before and what it was now. At least no one in the family had ever struck her, as she so proudly used to boast about that to others. But now that pride was crushed. She did not know how this would continue. A co-existence that was taking such terrible and horrible turn. The next morning Chingiz took Ziba to a midwife for examination. The midwife thought Chingiz was Ziba's father who wanted to check and make sure his daughter was a virgin before getting married. Chingiz did not reveal that he was her husband. The midwife assured him that Ziba was innocent and there were no reasons to worry.

Chingiz went back to his job after leaving Ziba at home. He went without saying much to Ziba. He was still angry and offended. It showed in his face, even from a distance. Ziba, who had not been able to sleep all night, could hardly dare say or ask anything. She stood at the foot of the bed like a servant waiting for the next order.

Chingiz went to work. Chingiz had no problems with not going home to Kobra. He had in the past stayed out many nights, some time even several nights on a row, with his friends in brothels; something that Kobra was quite accustomed to. So it was rather normal for Kobra not to see Chingiz for few days, and so long as she got her monthly allowance on time, she was fine.

Ziba's mother drops by at Ziba's at lunchtime. She asks her

how the first day of her married life has been. Ziba hardly dares say anything. She is not sure if she can trust anyone or if she can get help from anybody. It was she who had wanted to get married. She remembers how her parents asked her if she was sure about what she wanted.

It is true that the family was going through a hard time financially, with which they believed Chingiz could help, but they never forced Ziba to marry Chingiz.

Chingiz had made promises to Ziba's father to find him a job and a place to live. Chingiz had deceived them into thinking that he was financially well off. His lies were so convincing and so carefully thought-out that the family completely fell for them.

Ziba's mother noticed nothing and Ziba said nothing either. The mother stayed a few hours and left in the afternoon.

Chingiz came home late at night. Ziba, who sat anxiously at the little table at the kitchen's entrance, stood up with her head down and greeted him.

Chingiz barely responded.

What a life and what a living Chingiz had provided for his new bride.

A one-room flat of fifty square meters with a small kitchenette located on the lower floor of a three-story building.

Stepping into the house, one could cover the entire house in only five steps. As soon as one would come in the apartment through the white door at the entrance, one was in both the living room and the bedroom since there was a bed on the left side of the room and a kitchen nook to the right. Through the kitchen nook, one would get to the tiny bathroom and shower.

Walls, doors, windows and dressers were all painted in white. The flat had black vinyl flooring all throughout, the same color as Chingiz's heart.

To the right of the kitchen there was a small white dining table with two white chairs on each side. The bed, which felt like coffin for Ziba from the very first night, was white with white sheets. A small radio was placed on the window ledge. Chingiz had told Ziba's father that there was no need for Ziba to bring anything with her to their new home that is, dowry, because according to Chingiz, he already had everything. And anything else they needed he could acquire himself. The same misery that Kobra had to live with now started to hit Ziba as well.

She already got the first bitter experience of her life in the very first day of their living together. What would she do now? Who could she blame for such grave mistake that have been made?

No one, absolutely no one. She only had herself to blame. She did this out of vengeance, and now she got her revenge. Ziba was so stubborn and so stupid at times that no one could stop her from destroying her life.

One day, when she was younger, she got into an argument with her teacher at school.

The argument was over her hair. The teacher wanted all students to cut their hair short by the next day. But Ziba's mother did not get a chance to take Ziba to the hairdresser that day. The next morning Ziba got a tongue-lashing from her teacher. She did not keep quite and just listen as she usually would have done. Instead she replied that in all honesty, it was not her fault and as such, the teacher had no right to bark at her.

The teacher became all the more angry for having been humiliated in front of others by a smart-aleck. She raised her hand to slap Ziba in the face, but since Ziba dodged quickly to avoid getting hit, the teacher ended up hitting the wall and breaking the tip of her nicely polished nails.

Ziba stood there like a soldier at attention and reiterated once more that the teacher had no right to hit her. Ziba mentioned a few times, in a proud and flamboyant fashion, that her father never struck her and therefore no one else could ever do that either.

But now, it was a different matter. Who is to say that to Chingiz? Who will prevail, Chingiz or Ziba?

Chingiz was not talking much when he came home from work.

He asked what they were having for dinner. Fortunately Ziba had thought about it and cooked a simple dinner.

She set the table while Chingiz read his newspaper. At the table Chingiz shoveled the food in his mouth without saying anything or looking at Ziba. After dinner, it looked as if Chingiz's attitude changed a bit for the better. He was full and happy. His next pleasure was sex. So for that he must soften up and be a bit romantic to seduce his teenage wife. Ziba, who had no expectations except to please Chingiz, was glad that he was no longer mad at her. Although Ziba had not done anything wrong she took responsibility for what had happened.

The second night went well, but only for Chingiz. He satisfied himself with his young bride. He enjoyed every second, while Ziba tried hard to imagine making love to a man who is affectionate.

In the beginning she wanted to make love with Chingiz, but it took her no longer than a few minutes before she realized that in Chingiz's game of love there was no us. He only thought of himself. He never thought whether she was hurt by the fierce penetration, or that it was her first time.

Chingiz did not care about the horrible experience and the potential impact this may have on her that is, when one almost by force penetrates a young virgin so that she feels the pain all at once.

Chingiz had behaved in the same way with Kobra. This was nothing new. Chingiz was an animal in a human body.

That night Ziba went through a difficult ordeal. She experienced marriage's horrendous acts. Physical intimacy was something evil and terrible for her.

Chingiz satisfied himself and then fell asleep without any regard for his teenage wife.

First and foremost is the age difference between the two. Then it is the attitude of her husband. Worst of all is the relationship between them, which had already been destroyed from the wedding night.

Ziba had no one to turn to. She had no shoulders to lean on and cry on. She felt alone and left abandoned in the hands of an evil man, a man whom she had chosen herself. While it may be true that she did consent to such marriage, she was really not the only one at fault for the way her life was wrecked. After all, what happened to parents' responsibility and parental oversight? It would have been impossible for a minor like Ziba to get married without the blessing and permission of her parents.

Ziba acted irrationally and made a huge mistake out of pure stupidity, but why did her parents allow her to go through an appalling and outrageous marriage! Well, there is reason for everything.

Ziba's father was penniless. He was unemployed. He had a family to feed. He became desperate and sold some of the household articles in order to cope with the everyday expenses such as rent, food and other items. He had no savings. He was extremely desperate. Ziba's mother was not much of a help or support to the family. She was a simple housewife without much talent. An illiterate who got married for the sake of having a provider. She was docile and gullible. She was a cold-hearted woman, who did not allow emotions take over because she could not afford it. Letting emotions

guide one's life is the dumbest thing one can do. She was aware of her inferiority in life. That was why she wanted to lean against her husband and let him make decisions for everything. In addition, she did not have a good life let alone a luxurious one, so why should her children have it?

Chingiz had all the luck in the world when he happened to run into this family. How many families are there with the pitiful parents who do not think about anything other than their own benefit? That was exactly what they did when they allowed their daughter to go through with this marriage.

Chingiz did not want to have a large dowry or a big wedding. He did not want those so that the family would not demand any nuptial money. In this way, Chingiz could get away with incurring the expenses that a wedding would have.

After a few days Chingiz had to stay with Kobra. He could not be gone for a whole a week for no reason. Since Chingiz had no conscience or shame, he revealed to Ziba that he had another wife and that he would spend a few days at her place every week.

He was sure that Ziba was his and nothing could separate them from each other. The odds were in his favour.

Of course Chingiz did not come out straight and tell Ziba about his other marriage. Rather he started an argument with her and laid the blame on her for not satisfying him.

He went further to accuse her of not having been a virgin and claiming that he had been deceived.

He talked about how he had helped Ziba's family, how good he had been to them and in turn how they had fooled him with their lies about Ziba's innocence.

It was then that he mentioned how much he had come to appreciate what an angel his first wife was.

Ziba who could not say anything, and was as usual standing at the edge of the bed and crying like a baby, did not hear what Chingiz said at first.

To get her attention Chingiz repeated twice "my first wife, Kobra."

Ziba stopped suddenly. She sighed, took a deep breath and with a voice hoarse from crying she asked Chingiz "what did you say?"

Chingiz fell silent for a few seconds. Ziba was not crying any longer. She did not know whether she had heard right or not. She waited for an answer. Chingiz reached for his jacket and said.

You heard me, you whore, I said compared to you and your pathetic family, Kobra is an angel that God has spared me all these years.

Ziba is dumbfounded. What in the world is happening?

Is she dreaming or is this one of life's bitter realities that Ziba must endure. She wanted to pinch herself hoping that this was a nightmare and that she would wake up and find herself in a peaceful and carefree life like the one she had before she met Chingiz.

Unfortunately, she finds herself in the same miserable place that she was.

Chingiz repeated, when he gathered more courage: I said that my first wife is worth gold.

Now Ziba was sure she had heard right. First wife. Which wife? Where is she? What is happening? Is it not enough that Chingiz is so horrible to her? Is it not enough that she got herself into such lousy life?

No, it does not seem like it. This long corridor of pain and sorrow has a few maple doors that remain unopened.

Ziba sits on the bed. She cannot cry anymore. There are no tears to squeeze out of the eyes cavities. What should she say? What is there to say? Should she pack her bags and go back to those poor and pathetic parents of her or should she ask for divorce and start prostituting herself?

What is a woman in her situation supposed to do in a society

that does not have the slightest respect for divorced women? A society where there is no support either financially or emotionally for women.

Women are in one way or another, oppressed creatures in all societies. It is a fact that women are physically weaker than men but this does not mean that they are not as skilful or intelligent as men or in many cases even better.

Ziba sat there on the bed and thought. Chingiz was sitting at the dinner table now. He is not saying anything and is waiting for Ziba's next move. It was like a chess game, one making a move and waiting carefully to see what the other player has to offer. Each step must be studied carefully before one moves the pieces.

Chingiz is relieved. The burden of when and how the secret about his first wife would come out is gone. Now is the time to let it sink in and move on, he thought.

Ziba has nothing to say. She waits to become tougher and more mature by all the hardship that fate puts her through. She stretches her legs and gets up without saying a word to Chingiz.

Chingiz leaves and does not return home that night.

It is not easy to be married. It is like the lottery. Some are lucky and some are not. But what is luck? Is it fate? Is it God? What is it? Nobody knows, but as soon as something good or evil happens, people call it luck or bad luck.

Who knows what type of person one ends up marrying. Some say that there has to be a personal chemistry between two people. Others believe that a couple should go out together and get to know each other before they move in together. But would these be enough?

No, of course not. To live with another person means that there are two minds that make decisions and not just one. So conflicts, clashes, and contradictions become normal concepts in married life as are commonalities, compromise,

love and so forth.

However the degree of antagonism and conflict varies from one case to another. For some, it is possible to resolve their issues and move on; for others, it will be one of life's insurmountable tasks which cannot be overcome but by the act of separation between those who are incompatible.

It is ten o'clock the next morning. Ziba opens her eyes. At first she does not recognize the surroundings for a few seconds. The memory has blocked all that happened before she fell asleep. She sits up quickly on the edge of the bed to take a closer look at where she is. Now she remembers. She is at home. She fell asleep after an argument with Chingiz. But where is Chingiz? That's right; the bastard is out, certainly at his darling wife's, she thinks out-loud. Everything became crystal clear for her. She thinks. What will happen next? Perhaps Chingiz will file for divorce or he may move in and live with the other woman under the same roof. Oh God! What have I done? What a life I have chosen for myself. I am a prisoner for the rest of my life, she says to herself.

Ziba was surprised that Chingiz had not said anything about his wife before they married. She might not be happy about whom she chose as her husband, but she thought that she was the only wife Chingiz had. Now the question is who the first "lucky" woman is that Chingiz was praising the night before. Does she have it better than I? Ziba thought out-loud. Why did things turn out the way they did? What have I done? Ziba asked herself.

The door opens. Chingiz comes in. He does not seem angry or sad any longer. He has something in his hands. Ziba gets up. She is disappointed, hurt, saddened and angry but she hardly dares to speak. She softly says hello.

- Hello, Chingiz responds cheerfully.

Chingiz comes closer, stretches out a package he is holding and says

- Oh dear Ziba, I have bought this for you.

Ziba does not know what to say. She is afraid of getting smacked by Chingiz. She can no longer cope with being battered and humiliated. Yet, she must now find out who the other woman is.

- What is it? Ziba asks with trembling voice.

- Open it and you'll see, Chingiz responds with a big smile. Chingiz has bought her a dress. A simple red dress without any design. Chingiz sits down, takes a cigarette out of his pocket and lights up. He asks what there is for lunch as if it is Ziba's obvious duty to have prepared lunch for Sir Chingiz. Ziba says she will make something quickly. Surely it was no gourmet food. Omelet with white bread and water. After lunch, Chingiz wanted to have sex. Regardless of what Ziba wanted or how she felt, Chingiz would always get his way. So Ziba would only get whatever it was that Chingiz wanted. Ziba had not even had a chance to take a shower. Immediately after lunch all Ziba managed to do was to take off the clothes she was wearing the night before and lie down in bed. Chingiz starts his animalistic ritual and gets on top of Ziba with his heavy weight like a rhinoceros. As always Chingiz satisfies himself and goes to sleep right after.

For Ziba it feels as if she has been hit by a bus each time Chingiz crawls on top of her like an animal and penetrates her so viciously with such brutality and haste that she bursts into tears. The feeling of pain stops only after her ravaged body becomes numb inside.

There is nothing pleasant or delightful in what is called sex for Ziba. All she has experienced have been pain and burning sensation.

That day there were no more talks about Chingiz's other, or rather first wife. But the subject needs to come up some time. Neither Ziba nor Chingiz had barred the issue. They were both waiting for the right time to take it up.

What Ziba thought was that Chingiz had been married, but he certainly must have been divorced when he proposed to Ziba. It seemed as if Ziba had not really understood how bad the

situation was. She knew nothing about Chingiz, but she was not alone. None of her family members knew much about Chingiz either.

Given that Chingiz was out so often and he had so many contacts, it was impossible for anyone to figure out what he was up to.

Ziba is an active and clever girl who has not had a chance to show how capable she is. In addition, she is too young to fight for her rights and to stand on her own feet yet.

A week after Chingiz had confessed to one of his sins, the one about his first wife, Ziba could not hold back any longer. One night during dinner, she gathered all her courage and asked Chingiz

- Who was your first wife?

Chingiz, who was about to slurp his soup directly from the bowl without using a spoon, chokes on a green bean and starts coughing violently. He was caught off guard. Ziba panics and pours a glass of water for him. Chingiz turns red in the face because of the cough. The water helps and now Ziba waits in fear of getting assaulted by Chingiz either physically or verbally.

But, what the heck! I have to ask him about it some time, Ziba thinks to herself.

- Wow, that was a close call! Chingiz says.

There is silence for a few minutes. Ziba is waiting for a response but it is obvious in her face that she is scared. Afraid that Chingiz will get annoyed and start fighting again. Afraid of getting beaten up by him.

Due to Chingiz's attitude, she has lost her self-esteem to the point that she does not even recognize herself.

Chingiz wonders what he should say. How he should start and how much he should reveal?

This is no easy task. But this is something one should have thought of before ruining a teenager's life.

- Well, you know, I have been married mhhh . . . I mean I have been married to another woman for a long time.

Ziba does not believe her ears. She sits still without the slightest movement in her body. Not even her eyelids are moving any longer.

Chingiz who does not tend to be shy and gentle and is rather known for his rudeness and vulgarity, remains calm and collected and wants to try to prove his innocence.

He wants to try and turn things to his advantage.

- You know I had to marry a wicked girl because of my parents and relatives. They wanted it so I would not ruin my life . . .

Chingiz did not get to continue as he was interrupted by Ziba asking him:

- What's her name and where is she now?

- Yes, she um . . . her name is Kobra, responds Chingiz doubtfully as if he wants to avoid such issues and forget all about it.

He should have kept his mouth shut rather than divulging anything about Kobra.

- Where is she? Ziba asks in a low and soft voice so as not to awaken the beast in Chingiz but to get a real answer from him now that he appears to be willing to answer.

Chingiz does not really know how it would turn out if he responds to Ziba's questions directly. He is not afraid of her, but he does not want to be mistaken by her. He has an angel in his life, but the question is how to hold on to her. He knows he cannot keep her if he reveals everything about himself and his dark past.

But what is done is done. He has already opened his big mouth and talked about Kobra, and now he must finish this discussion one way or another. Best to go back to his usual self. Thus becoming the evil and brazen Chingiz that he has always been.

Chingiz pulls himself together and continues with a more assertive voice and focused mind.

- She is alive if that is what you want to know. She and I have been married for many years, but we stopped being intimate a long time ago. She is ill and cannot have sex. Kobra has sacrificed her life for me and I am eternally grateful to her, responds Chingiz.

Ziba sat still and listened carefully to every word that came out of Chingiz's mouth. She did not know what to say since there was something that did not make a lot of sense. First, Kobra was allegedly evil and then she becomes the angel to whom Chingiz is forever grateful.

Who was this woman called Kobra, good or evil?

Ziba thinks to herself, Chingiz was married when he proposed to me. He is old and has the worst attitude and mannerism anyone can have. OK, she said to herself.

Is there another side to Chingiz, may be a positive side? Ziba asked herself.

Not likely. Absolutely impossible, is the answer. So far things look dark for Ziba.

Chingiz returns to eating as if everything is fine now and Ziba has temporarily got the answer she wanted.

Ziba assesses the situation. If she comes up with another question, things could go wrong for her. The tone of voice in Chingiz's last answer was not calm or mild. So now it might be better to lay low until the next opportunity comes along. This will be brought up again.

After dinner Chingiz wanted to have sex with Ziba as he always does.

He treats Ziba in bed like he would a whore. He is not used to asking for anything, especially sex. He is not used to starting with a little foreplay or romance. Even the animals of various kinds have some sort of ritual before copulating, but not Chingiz.

Now it is sickening. Ziba does not want it. How will she stand up to Chingiz? Would she dare do that or should she give in and find herself at a disadvantage? It was not easy to decide.

She thought that now might be the best chance. For now he is in need of something that Ziba can give him, so why not use the chance and while it may be a shot in the dark, it might just work.

She says to Chingiz

- Before sex, I want to ask you about your wife, I mean your first . . .

Suddenly there was a whiz and a hard hit immediately after. It was Chingiz not allowing Ziba to finish her sentence and stopping her with a big slap in the face, so hard in the face that she was thrown on the floor.

The whole room started to spin. The smack came so suddenly and quickly that she did not know what it was that hit her in the face. She was in a state of shock for several minutes.

Lying on the floor with one hand on the side of her face that got the blast, Ziba began to feel pain in her jaw and in one ear, which caused her ear to ring intensely in a high pitch.

- Now you son of a bitch you cannot give me grief, otherwise I will kill you, says Chingiz furiously.

Ziba turns red in the face. Body temperature rises to a boiling point. Blood streams quickly like light in her veins and receptacles. She starts sweating. She is squashed like a bug on the floor. She feels humiliated and dirty. Not even a prostitute is treated the way she is by her darling husband. Chingiz takes his jacket and walks out again. It is his habit to leave everything and flee.

Ziba is tired of everything. She is tired of the life and the misery that she has brought on herself. She finds no other way out than suicide. It is not the first time she thinks about this stupid idea. Ziba has always been interested in novels

and love-stories. She used to read a lot of those and they were often filled with suicides. Such stories as Romeo and Juliet have always touched Ziba. But for her it was not in the same way. She does not want to sacrifice her life for her love, no; she wants to take her life because of her monstrous husband.

Chingiz is back before Ziba gets a chance to think things through.

Strange, Ziba thinks. How is it that Chingiz is back now?

What is going on? She wonders.

- Enough is enough. Lie on the bed! I am your husband and you do as I say! Chingiz orders her.

Ziba gets up and goes to the bathroom without a word.

Chingiz takes off his clothes and crawls under the covers. He is waiting for his wife. He expects Ziba to please him unconditionally.

A few minutes pass. Chingiz hears Ziba open a bathroom cabinet and then drink water from the tap but nothing more.

He shouts out at Ziba

- Woman, come on! Chingiz screams.

Ziba comes out. She has something in her hand. She sits at the dining table and puts it on the table. She cries. The tears come running down her cheek and onto the floor like a small waterfall.

Chingiz gets up while swearing at everything and everyone.

- What is it with you now? He asks.

Chingiz comes to Ziba and he notices the small empty bottle Ziba has put on the table. He takes it up. They were sleeping pills that Chingiz occasionally took to get some sleep.

- What the hell have you done? Are you crazy? Have you poured the whole bottle in your fucking stomach you fucking idiot? You want to commit suicide, you can do that but not here in my house you spoiled bastard, Chingiz yells out.

Chingiz did not care about Ziba's condition. What he was concerned about was getting blamed for her death.

He dresses in a hurry, calls a taxi and takes Ziba to the nearest medical clinic.

Meanwhile Ziba falls deeper into sleep. Chingiz tries to keep her awake by hitting her in the face. If Ziba falls into a deep sleep, it is over for her.

At the clinic, Ziba's stomach had to be pumped.

She threw up everything in her stomach so the pills did not get to have their full effect more than what they did.

The doctor, who neither knew Chingiz nor Ziba, thought Chingiz was Ziba's father.

- Why has your daughter done this? Asks the doctor.

Chingiz, who did not want to say much, did not tell him that he was Ziba's husband. He pays the doctor and says:

- I do not want to talk about it. So if everything is OK now, we want to go home.

The doctor asks nothing more and let the father and daughter go home.

This time everything went well and she was saved. She got to go home a few hours later.

On the way back Chingiz keeps quiet. Ziba is still feeling sick and sleepy.

They go to bed as soon as they are home. Another day of this happy life is over.

The next day Ziba wakes up in the middle of the day with a massive headache.

Chingiz has gone to work. First Ziba was disoriented and did not know where she was.

It took a few seconds before she pulled herself together and got a grip on where she was and what had happened.

- It was a dumb thing to do, she said to herself.

She thought that it was not worth killing herself for someone who does not even change his attitude when he sees how awful she feels.

Ziba remembered what Chingiz told her when he saw the pills' bottle. She realized how cold and insensitive Chingiz was. A man with a heart of stone. So why sacrifice her life for a kind of bastard that he was.

In reality Ziba wanted to get Chingiz's attention in this way. She thought that this could change his attitude for the better, but that was in vain.

- Thank goodness that at least he saved me, said Ziba to herself.

Now Ziba was sure that she was alone and abandoned in her little house. Not even her family could help her. She knows now how Chingiz is and with whom she has to deal.

Therefore, she now decides to act in a cunning way.

Ziba is clever and resourceful. Her only mistake in life so far has been her stubbornness. To have destroyed her own life when things did not go her way. But now, she has learned her lesson. It is never too late to start again.

- It cannot get worse than this, she thinks to herself.

She plans quickly and begins.

She rises, drinks squeezed lime juice to calm her headache and begins to clean, cook and put the home in order as if nothing has happened.

She dresses nicely, puts on a simple makeup and waits for Chingiz.

The clock on the window ledge keeps ticking away. One minute, quarter, half an hour, one hour, two, three . . . hours go by; it is past midnight and still no Chingiz.

Ziba falls asleep at the dinner table.

Suddenly she hears a key rattle in the keyhole and wakes up. Chingiz arrives. Ziba gets up and greets him. Chingiz looks around. Everything is in order. The house is sparkling clean. Ziba is dressed nicely and the table is set.

Chingiz, the primitive neanderthal, smiles and says hello. He looks happy. He is got a maid who feeds him and satisfies his sexual needs.

Ziba walks toward Chingiz with a smile and takes his jacket, hangs it on the coat hanger, and invites him to the table.

Chingiz sits at the table. He looks pleased. Ziba serves the food, which was kept warm for hours, out of the oven. They eat although none of them were hungry. Chingiz had already eaten with Kobra and Ziba was not feeling well.

Not a word is spoken at the dinner table. Neither Ziba nor Chingiz wanted to ruin the mood by saying something wrong. After dinner, Ziba clears the table and wipes off the tablecloth. The night is young. Ziba allows the dishes to be left for later. Instead, she gets undressed and invites Chingiz to bed. She wants to have Chingiz on top of her.

Chingiz had nothing against that. He loved whores. He grew up with whores and had his roots in such despicable surroundings and interactions. His greatest desire was to do what he wanted with his wife in the same manner as he would with a hooker.

All this was a part of Ziba's plan. She must press the right buttons to get Chingiz where she wants him, something that none of the other women in his life succeeded to do.

Chingiz takes off his clothes in haste and crawls in bed with Ziba. He starts swearing at Ziba,

- You slut, I am going to fuck your brains out. I want to take

you like a dog! (?) I . . . Chingiz continued saying more of the same to Ziba with pleasure.

He expected Ziba to behave like a prostitute and play that role when they made love.

That night Ziba endured a lot of horrible name-calling. Chingiz forced her into anal sex. She had to swallow his semen. She had to take him deeper into her mouth, though she was about to choke and throw up everything in her stomach.

Ziba heard many fine, affectionate words from Chingiz, like the ones prostitutes hear from their clients. And last but not least, Ziba got the scare of her life by her loving husband's conduct during that wonderful love-making episode.

For Ziba, putting herself through such horrendous experience that night was a means of pleasing Chingiz and getting him to soften up, which was the first phase of her plan.

It was humiliating for her. She felt dirty and disgusted. She realized just how lonely and abandoned she was. It was something that she had to live with for the rest of her life.

Everything went well for Chingiz anyway. He was happy and satisfied. He could never believe that he would get such an obedient wife. For him, this was pure paradise, but this was not to last forever.

The days went by one after another. Six months of their marriage had gone. Much had happened during that time.

Chingiz clashed with Ziba's parents and forbade Ziba to meet with them or her other relatives. She became more and more isolated. What was worse was that she got pregnant. At home, she was run ragged with housework from dawn to dusk.

Chingiz had set hard rules for her at home. Ziba received money for household expenses weekly. For that, she had to keep accurate details plus all the receipts; and, every Friday she had to explain each and every expenditure to Chingiz. He was careful with how Ziba spent the money. This was Chingiz's way to maintain full control of Ziba, something he could not do with anyone else but now it was his golden opportunity to exercise his dominance over a teenager. But Ziba was smarter than that. She learned quickly that she must fend for herself. That there is no helping hand extended to her. She stood alone against a tyrant of a husband. From the weekly allowance, Ziba started saving a little here and a little there for a rainy day without Chingiz's knowledge.

The pregnancy was a trump card for her, or at least, that is what Ziba thought. She was sure that Chingiz's attitude would change with the arrival of a baby.

The big day came. Chingiz was at home when Ziba went into labour.

What surprised Ziba was that Chingiz brought home a midwife to help with the childbirth. Chingiz had planned that in advance without saying anything to Ziba. As soon Ziba went into labour he went out and came back an hour later with the midwife.

Ziba, who thought she would deliver at a hospital, saw this dream crushed like all her other dreams. Now she understood why Chingiz was never interested in talking about the pregnancy.

Since the first time Ziba woke up with nausea, Chingiz had

no intentions to allow her to undergo medical examination. She found out about her pregnancy as her stomach got bigger with time.

She never got to go to a doctor. Not even her parents knew about it as they had moved to another city. Ziba's father had got a job in a city far from the capital.

Ziba's hope that a child would change Chingiz's attitude and get him to soften up was completely in vain.

A midwife was the only one who was present at the birth. Chingiz left them and did not come back until the day after. Ziba and Chingiz had a daughter. A little sweet daughter in good health. She was born in the same bed and same home as Ziba had experienced all the pain and misery of living with Chingiz.

But Ziba was happy. It was her first child. She was a mother now. The feeling of motherhood had awakened in her. A feeling that gives a woman one hundred percent strength to protect her children.

Chingiz and Ziba never talked about the baby. Ziba tried a few times to take up the subject and get Chingiz's attention, but it only led to more fights and quarrels. So most of the decisions about the baby including, choosing her name was left to Ziba. She already had baby names in mind for both boys and girls. Now that it was clear that it was a girl, she called her Anahita.

Ziba was glad to have a girl. Someone of the same sex that she can have as sister in her old age, she thought. Anahita was a sweet little innocent girl who opened her eyes in a rat-hole, called home.

Although Chingiz did not show any interest in their child, he was proud of himself. She was his child. An old man in his sixties had made a baby. This was proof that he was still as healthy and strong as a young guy.

The next day, Chingiz comes home. He does not look angry but he is not happy either. He is indifferent toward the baby. Ziba holds the baby in her arms and goes up to Chingiz.

- Look! We've had a little girl. I gave her the name Anahita. Do not be shy to hold her in your arms! Ziba says cheerfully. Chingiz looks at the baby.

He sees how Anahita's small hands move in the air. He sees how the little creature he helped to create looks at him with a beautiful smile. All that occupies him for a few seconds. He takes hold of his little girl and asks Ziba

- Did you say her name was Anahita?

- Yes, if you do not mind? Asks Ziba gently.

- No, no, my little girl. Congratulations Ziba. She is a sweet, little girl you have given birth to, Chingiz says cheerfully.

That is most surprising to Ziba. She is amazed how Chingiz's cold and cruel attitude has changed to the point of congratulating and praising her for something. She is just as much surprised as she is glad to have got Chingiz to say such words as CONGRATS and got him to be positively involved. Unfortunately, life's good moments are always shorter than those of bad.

Now Chingiz had proof of his masculinity. Proof that he is still good for something. Something that he could not prove in the years after Kobra's illness. Something that made him feel humiliated. All of Kobra's family accused Chingiz for what had happened to Kobra. All of them blamed Chingiz for Kobra's sickness and her eventual surgery that resulted in the removal of her uterus and lifelong illness.

Now, Chingiz had the means to show that he could function. That he was still effective. That he was a real man. And that

he was the father of a newborn baby.

Chingiz is now eager to show off his child to those who made him feel so miserable for years. He wants to show Anahita to the whole world. Therefore, he starts to talk about Ziba everywhere. He no longer wants to keep Ziba hidden from the world. He is anxious to reveal his marriage to Ziba so that he can use Anahita as a thorn on the side of Kobra's family. Ziba who had nothing against Chingiz boasting and bragging to people, as this was part of the second phase of her plan, went out of her way to help Chingiz and to pave the way for him to show off Anahita before friends and acquaintances. It did not take long before Kobra found out what Chingiz had been up to those past couple of years. Chingiz told her about Ziba and Anahita.

He put the blame on Kobra for his new marriage. In particular, he claimed that her illness was the reason he had to re-marry.

Kobra, who had long ago stopped worrying about Chingiz re-marrying, becomes aware of it only when it is too late for her to use witchcraft to hinder its occurrence. She is furious at Chingiz when he tells her about Ziba and Anahita.

Legally, there was nothing Kobra could do about it. The laws were on Chingiz's side because Kobra was physically unable to perform her wifely duties. But Kobra is not the type of person who gives up easily. She will now raise hell. She shouts at Chingiz and curses him and his new family.

Kobra is great at making a scene and getting her family involved to sort Chingiz out. Specially, with Chingiz's awful reputation and his disgusting affairs, which are well known by Kobra since she was the one hiring domestic help mostly for the purposes of keeping Chingiz busy. It was Kobra who took one of the maids to a midwife when she got pregnant by Chingiz.

Kobra put up with all this for many years so as to avoid

having someone else take her place. Regardless of how miserable Chingiz was, Kobra did not want him to have another wife. To deal with Chingiz's new marriage, Kobra could do nothing but to rely on her sorcery and on propagandizing against his new family.

At first, Chingiz ignored Kobra. His visits with Kobra became less frequent. He started spending more time with Ziba and Anahita. He treated Ziba a little different. She who had managed to make slight changes to Chingiz's cold and cruel attitude did not want to rush things. Chingiz still wanted detailed weekly report on household budget. Ziba was still a maid to Chingiz.

She goes on to serve him and please him unconditionally. But Ziba has found something that keeps her dreams alive. She is happy over having Anahita in her life.

Kobra, who is not sitting still rather busy planning to end Chingiz's new marriage, starts arranging family get togethers where her relatives can get a chance to meet Chingiz and intimidate him. The family gatherings are held once a week and each week at a different relative's house. Chingiz has no desire to attend these gatherings but he is afraid that by not showing up, he would give Kobra an upper hand to bash him and to turn everyone against him. He is therefore, forced to go at least one night a week. It is ironic that Chingiz who did not want to spend any time with Kobra since Anahita was born, no longer had a choice in the matter and had to be with not just Kobra but also her family once a week.

All this gave Kobra a chance to pour in Chingiz a lot of mysterious mixtures in the hope that the devil and his companions will help her put an end to the second marriage. At the same time, Kobra's relatives kept condemning him for what he had done to Kobra.

God knows what they would have done with Chingiz if they knew what Kobra knew about him and the creep that he was.

Ziba, who is now a little happier about her life than before, totally unaware of what Kobra is cooking up for her, keeps busy with household chores and looking after Anahita. But Ziba is not a child anymore. She is slowly learning how to get on Chingiz's good side and how to survive. For one thing, Ziba realized that the birth of their daughter had made some positive impact on Chingiz, something that she could use to her advantage. Then she found ways to start a saving for herself by putting away small portions of the household money she received from Chingiz every week without him noticing it.

Chingiz has come clean with Kobra. He is more open about his feelings for Ziba and Anahita and more interested in getting rid of Kobra's nagging about betrayal and divorce. Kobra has openly expressed her desire for Chingiz to divorce Ziba.

Days and nights go by. Anahita gets older and older. She is now six months old. Ziba wants to move to a bigger apartment. A room with kitchenette is not suitable for a family of three. She has on several occasions brought up the subject, but has not got any response from Chingiz. Ziba believes that Anahita should have her own room. But one cannot talk reason with Chingiz. He easily gets annoyed when Ziba says the same thing twice. There has been one improvement with Chingiz though. He has not stepped foot in a brothel for quite some time and this counts as a big success for Ziba. Perhaps Chingiz saw no reason for such despicable conducts after seeing how Ziba stood by him and did everything he asked of her. Perhaps Chingiz cannot live that way anymore, and he has realized the value of a normal life. Perhaps . . .

No one knows why, but for whatsoever reason the only place he goes to is work and nowhere else.

Ziba has no contact with her parents and relatives, and she

does not socialize with her neighbours either. Chingiz has banned her from all that and for the moment she obeys him without any questions.

One evening Ziba cooks steak and roasted potatoes, Chingiz's favourite meal. She puts on a sexy make-up, wears her short red dress without anything under it, and makes herself look seductive for Chingiz. All this trouble just to get him to agree to move into an apartment.

As usual, good luck can at any time turn into bad luck. Chingiz had been at Kobra's place that day for lunch. It was Kobra who had called Chingiz at work and asked to meet him to talk about an important thing. Chingiz under the influence of all those mysterious mixtures poured into him and tired of Kobra's badgering goes to her place for lunch.

Kobra has changed her approach and has quit talking about betrayal and divorce instead she goes at Chingiz from a different angle. She starts to talk about the age difference between Chingiz and Ziba, on the wishes and needs of a young girl, on the appeal of young men to Ziba, and the danger of adultery in such bizarre marriage.

Instead of trying to nag at Chingiz, Kobra claims to be looking out for him and giving him good advice. She pretends to be concerned about him and his new wife. She wants to play the role of a mother-in-law who protects her son from getting hurt by his bride and her family.

Kobra easily plants the seeds of suspicion in Chingiz. But she is well aware that it takes more than one session of such negative and adversarial talks to make an impact on Chingiz and make him completely suspicious of Ziba.

All the nonsense that Kobra puts in Chingiz's head give Chingiz a lot to think about during the rest of the day.

Certain things became clear for Chingiz during his visit with Kobra. He keeps thinking and thinking. It is true that he is much older than Ziba. It is true that he will not live long

enough to see Ziba become old. And it is true that he will not be sexually strong and active for long. How long has he got left? He is sixty-six years old and Ziba only seventeen. How long can he keep up and stay active? Five, ten, twenty or maximum twenty-five years if there are no odds against him, he thinks out-loud after leaving Kobra's place. These are what he thought about all the while when he took a long walk from Kobra's house.

The effects of these troubling thoughts started to manifest themselves when Chingiz came home that night. Ziba who had taken the trouble of making herself look seductive to her husband, in the hopes of convincing him to move them to a decent apartment, gets to see her husband angry and bitter. Chingiz does not even say hello when he comes in. He does not notice her dress and makeup. He sits at the dining table and asks what is for dinner. Ziba serves the food without a word. She sees in Chingiz's face how irritated he is. But why? Ziba wonders.

What is it now? Is he mad at me or something has happened at work? She asks herself.

They eat without exchanging a word at the dinner table. After dinner, Chingiz reads, or pretends to read, his newspaper when in fact he is in deep thoughts which Kobra put in his head earlier that day.

Ziba takes care of the dishes after dinner. She does not know how to get him out of his thoughts. She is afraid to make him aggravated and cause a fight. After doing the dishes she goes to bed. She asks Chingiz if he wants to join her. She offers herself to divert Chingiz's mind. He takes his eyes off the newspaper and glances over at her. He looks at her for a few minutes.

He is almost staring at her. Ziba has a bra and a brief on. She is lying on top of the blanket so that Chingiz can see her body and gets drawn to her. Anahita sleeps in the same room in a

crib that Chingiz had bought at a flea market. So Ziba must speed up the process before Anahita wakes up. It only takes a small noise from Chingiz to wake up Anahita.

The sight of Ziba arouses Chingiz, and slows down his brain activity.

So he thinks with his penis and not with his brain any longer. Ziba has managed to seduce him. He gets up, takes off his clothes and crawls into bed with Ziba.

For Ziba, it seems everything is going as planned. But so simple it was not. In the middle of the night Chingiz wakes up frustrated and angry at the whole world. He hates everything and everyone. He starts accusing Ziba of adultery. Chingiz sits on the chair at the dining table while talking loudly and uninterrupted about how he was deceived into this marriage. He keeps babbling on about how he will find out about Ziba's unfaithfulness and what goes on during the day when he is at work. Chingiz begins to accuse her of everything. He even claims that perhaps Anahita is not his child rather someone else's with whom Ziba secretly had an affair.

Ziba wakes up. She does not understand a word of what Chingiz says. This was a new chapter for her. She was used to a lot of nonsense from Chingiz except this. How is it that he now wakes up in the middle of the night, accusing her of adultery? Where did he get this damn idea? She was to find out the answer later when Chingiz talks about his lunch date with Kobra. That is when Ziba understands Kobra's role in Chingiz life.

Kobra, who could not get a chance to talk to Chingiz before, is now involved in his life in a way that can ruin all Ziba's plans, she thinks to herself as she listens to Chingiz's rambling about his visit with Kobra earlier that day.

Ziba never got a real chance to ask questions about Kobra. She still does not know who Kobra really is and what

Chingiz's life was like before he met her.

Chingiz is so angry and irate that he no longer cares about what comes out of his mouth. He praises Kobra while at the same time, cursing Ziba.

- Who knows what the hell this whore is up to when I'm at work? She was not even a virgin when I married her. I am sure that she had slept with someone before she married me. Her fucking father tricked me. This fucking family got me trapped, he rambles on.

Chingiz becomes more and more provoked in his hysterical outbreaks. He turns to Ziba and says:

- God knows if it was not your father who took your virginity.

This was like someone drove a knife straight into Ziba's heart. She could tolerate a lot of things, but this was beyond any level of stupidity and cruelty. She bursts into crying and the tears run down her face. Her father is accused of incest. Her honour is questioned and brought into disgrace by a man who has no shame. She cries so loud that Anahita wakes up. Chingiz cares neither for Ziba who is sitting on the bed and crying nor for Anahita who cries lying in her bed. He continues with his ranting and raving. Ziba gets up and takes Anahita in her arms while she cries of grief. Her heart aches. It is now the feeling of hatred against Chingiz that gets a hold of Ziba.

- What is it you want Chingiz? What have I done to you? Have I not been an affectionate and sympathetic wife for you? Asks Ziba with a rasping voice filled with sorrow. Chingiz does not listen to her. He carries on talking nonstop like that of a radio transmission that goes on continuously around the clock. Chingiz continues to blame Ziba and accuse her of a lot of things. On the other hand, he praises his beloved Kobra for all the years she served him.

All and all, through Chingiz's rampage a lot of new

information about Kobra and her children comes up that are new to Ziba. Chingiz happens to mention the name of the children he has with Kobra, Saaid and Sara. He praises them and brags about them and their success in life, as if it was he who sacrificed his life for their upbringing.

These were new names for Ziba.

How long this madness will continue, Ziba thinks to herself while Chingiz talks like a parrot saying the same things over and over again. What is the background of this man anyway? How stupid could I have been to let myself be drawn into this life? Ziba wonders.

Why are men so selfish? Men believe they are superior to women. Men think they can manage everything in life no matter how old they are. They never feel old and worn out. Many have no respect for the opposite sex and believe that women are created for men's sake. Regardless of which part of the world they come from, in many ways they all have condescending views regarding women.

Even in countries where women have more freedom there are areas where men have dominion over women.

That night neither Ziba nor Anahita would get a moment of peace and quiet. Chingiz went on till five o'clock in the morning nagging and complaining about everything. Finally, he was tired and went to bed at half past five in the morning before he had to get up about an hour later to go to work. But thanks to Chingiz, Ziba had to nurse Anahita who was restless and could not go back to sleep.

Anahita is a calm and peaceful child. Some children have a tendency to cry a lot and make a fuss over everything.

Anahita is nothing like that. As soon as Ziba breastfeeds her, she goes to sleep.

In the morning after Chingiz goes to work, Ziba dresses up and leaves with Anahita. She visits her uncle Hussein who lives on the other side of the town.

It is the first time since she got married that she visits her family. Hussein and his wife, Shadi, are delighted to see her. No one dared visit Ziba since she married that monster Chingiz. He forbade her to have any contact with anyone, particularly her family. But Ziba who is tired of all his bickering and badgering wanted to see if he can help her to find a way out of this abusive relationship.

Ziba talks about all that she has had to endure since she swallowed her pride and set foot in that mad-man's house. She cannot turn to her parents for help since they now live in another city. And she cannot reach anyone else since there is no phone at home. The only way she gets to know about her parents is through correspondence, although secretively, so as to keep it hidden from Chingiz.

She tells Hussein everything. That half the time she does not know whether she is coming or going. That she is married and is afraid of becoming a widower. That she has to deal with the unfortunate reality of having a child who needs support from both parents but is deprived of that since Chingiz is no support for either Anahita or Ziba. Ziba does not want to give up hope thinking that may be one day Chingiz would come to his senses and calm down.

This is exactly the same mistake that Kobra and all others made with regard to Chingiz. He never took anything as seriously as his own enjoyment. When he could not change his ways and become a better man all those years, how could he do that now?! . . .

Ziba is desperate. She feels humiliated to have gone to her relatives Hussein and his family. If she could have found other ways to solve her problem, she would have opted for that.

Hussein listens to her. He remembers how the misery began. He remembers the day he learned about how his sister and brother-in-law, that is Ziba's parents, made such unethical

and immoral decision that would have devastating impact on the life of their own teenage daughter.

Hussein was the only close relative who openly voiced his criticism and opposed this marriage.

Therefore, he did not attend the pitiful wedding ceremony for Ziba and Chingiz which was held at Ziba's father's home.

Now Hussein had the confirmation about what he feared the most and warned his sister all along.

Hussein is a retired welder who lives a scarce life with his wife. They did not have any children because of Hussein's impotence, which was caused by the side effects of radiation he was exposed to at work, welding without protective clothing. He had worked as a welder since he was thirteen years old.

Hussein was a wise man. He was also a kind man who would stand up for others and for what was right. If he could help Ziba's father to find a job, when he got laid off, and thus prevent this unholy marriage, he would have. Not being able to help out, Hussein felt partially responsible for what had happened.

After Ziba pours out her heart for Hussein and his wife, Hussein promises to get in touch with Ziba's father and talk to him.

Ziba, who needs to get home quickly before Chingiz shows up, cuts her visit short and heads back to the torture chamber called "home."

She feels slightly relieved after sharing her secret with someone in the family.

Chingiz comes home at around nine that night. He does not appear to be bitter. Ziba does not know in what state of mind he is. She greets him and gets an answer back. Chingiz asks how the day has been for Ziba, which is rather weird. He has never been interested in how Ziba's days were.

He has been very restrictive. Ziba cannot contact the family and may not have friends to hang out with.

With that question Ziba becomes just as worried as she is surprised. Worried that Chingiz may have got a wind of her visit at Hussein's and surprised over Chingiz's sudden interest in her existence. How will she respond? Should she reveal where she was or keep her mouth shut? Does Chingiz know about the visit or is this just an innocent question?

She remains silent for a minute while thousands of questions go through her head. She decides not to tell anything about her little escapade.

- Yes, it was O.K.

Chingiz watches her attentively while he sits at the dining table. It seems that he is waiting for dinner. Ziba picks up his slippers and puts them in front of his feet.

Then she sets the table, but before she gets a chance to dish out the food Chingiz asks:

- Did you not go out today?

Now it is serious. Chingiz must have something up his sleeves to have come up with such a question. Ziba starts to tremble. Anahita sleeps and everything has been calm so far, which is what Ziba so desperately wants. Worst of all, she does not want to get smacked, but what is the more reasonable way out of this: tell the truth, or come up with something that does not arouse suspicion?

- Yes, Anahita and I took a little walk in the city. It was fine weather. Ziba responds with a trembling voice while she puts the food on the table.

Chingiz picks up his plate and gives it to Ziba. She serves him his food. Ziba dares not look into his eyes. He starts gulping down his food in a big hurry. He has no table manners whatsoever.

Ziba has lost her appetite and does not feel hungry. There is a notch in her stomach, but to avoid drawing any attention to

herself from Chingiz, she takes a bit of food and starts eating. The first round is completed. Chingiz stretches her plate out to Ziba. She gets up and serves the pig again. Chingiz says no more at the table.

After dinner, as Ziba starts cleaning up the table, Chingiz says

- The local vendor saw you going out today and it was him who called me at work. I had asked him to keep an eye on you.

It is now that Ziba understands why Chingiz was questioning her about where she was. Mystery is solved. She realizes that Chingiz does not know where she really was. But this makes her aware that there are people in the neighborhood who spy on her. She notes that this was the first time she ventured outside of her immediate residential area. All other times, she would only go to the local stores to do her daily shopping. So that is why Chingiz never asked her about her daily activities. Because he already knew, thanks to his spies in the neighbourhood.

Ziba becomes disappointed and furious but tries not to show how she feels. Chingiz is baffled by Ziba's silence and out of pure curiosity he asks her

- Did you hear what I just said?

- Yes, I heard you. Ziba responds before things get out of control.

- Well! What do you think of that? Chingiz asks in a rude and arrogant manner.

Ziba is frustrated and would much rather punch his lights out. She wished she could once and for all, have the courage to take care of this creep.

I wish I was strong enough that I could crush every bone in his body, thinks Ziba to herself.

There is a heavy atmosphere; the air is full of anger and hatred on one front and contempt and derision on the other.

Chingiz, sitting at the dinner table with his head turned towards her, waits for Ziba's reaction with a smirk on his face. Ziba stands at the sink with a plate in one hand and a dish sponge in the other. It is quiet in the room. The only sound is the water flowing from the tap into the sink.

Ziba turns to Chingiz

- Is it that you don't trust me? She asks.

- No it is for your own good, and it is good to know that one is not alone. It is dangerous for a young woman with a child to be alone at home. Accidents can happen and then there is no one you can turn to because you are too young and inexperienced in this world, he replies.

With these words and phrases Chingiz tried to justify his actions. He wanted to turn things to his own advantage and claim that he was doing Ziba a service.

Ziba is young and inexperienced but not dumb and blind. She knows well what this is. Chingiz wants to control her. In order not to make trouble and avoid further quarrels, she tries to end an unpleasant conversation for the time being and move on.

- Thanks! Ziba says in the hope that Chingiz would let go of the subject.

The day after, when Chingiz is on his way out to work, he says

- If you need me for anything go to the tailor next door, he has my phone number, and call me from there! I have already spoken with him.

He writes his work phone number on top of yesterday's newspaper that lies on the table.

That day Ziba had a lot to do; wash, clean, cook, and everything else. But she knew she would have "new tasks" later.

Chingiz goes to work. By eleven o'clock he gets a phone call at work whereby he is told that his daughter, Sara, has been in an accident and is at the main hospital in town.

He rushes out to the hospital. Now, Kobra, Saaid, and Sara have become more endearing to Chingiz than before. It seems that he does not understand the value of what he has at a given time but always after the fact. Now it is too late to play a fatherly role particularly, that of a caring father and husband toward those for whom he never cared since the beginning.

But Kobra and her kids are not very fond of him either, be it in his role as a husband to the former or a father to the latter. Instead they are disappointed in him and feel more hatred than admiration toward their "beloved" pig of a father.

The one who is even more bitter and resentful is Sam who wishes his father all evil in the world.

Kobra's plan is to try and destroy Chingiz's new life.

The accident was not a serious one and the injury, which was reported by Kobra to have been extensive, was nothing more than an over-exaggeration.

The way it was put to Chingiz, it appeared as if Sara was on her death-bed when in reality she had no serious injuries. Chingiz rushes to the hospital. He is melancholic, or at least he looks that way. Kobra is the first he sees at the hospital, an opportunity which gives her more time to get him worked up. She makes a big fuss out of the whole thing and spices it up as much as she can. She claims that Sarah's car is a wreck and now she needs a new car as her husband cannot afford getting one for her.

Since Chingiz has a measly pension and no debts, he has no problems in applying and getting a loan from bank. And this is a golden opportunity to strike in order to exploit the situation further.

Chingiz visits Sara. He looks worried and sad and is now suddenly a father who loves his daughter, now when someone else has raised her and sacrificed her youth to give her a good life.

Chingiz stays there a few hours. In the meantime, Kobra and Sara's husband, Hoshang, come at him like flies on a cake. After Chingiz calms down, with all Kobra's whispering in his ears about a new car for Sara, he decides to go ahead and buy a new car for his daughter.

Now he is really under her spell. It seems as if all her sorcery rituals and the mysterious potions and meals that she fed him all these years begin to work. Kobra, Saaïd, and Sara have been elevated to another status in Chingiz's life. Chingiz, who would never agree to something so easily without intimidation and interference from Kobra's family, now accepts Kobra's proposal and wants to get a new car for Sara. Therefore Chingiz and Kobra go directly to the bank that afternoon, submitting an application for a loan at the same bank branch where Sara's husband, Hoshang, works. So it is not surprising that his application gets approved the very same day. Everything was now clear and it was meant to reap the rewards.

Now Chingiz is in debt up to his ears and there goes Ziba's dream of moving into a decent living quarters.

Chingiz comes home earlier than usual and he is both horny and angry. He is angry that from now on, he must begin to repay the loan. There are a lot of expenses that he must pay for each month out of his low income. At such times of uncertainty and panic, he tends to have a higher sexual appetite and more sexual urges.

In the past, the road to the brothel was his only escape route but now it is home where he has his wife Ziba to provide him with sexual relief. A dungeon where his obedient wife, Ziba, is always glad to be of service to him.

Chingiz opens the door and sees Ziba feeding Anahita. Ziba greets him and asks

- Has something happened?

- No, Why?!

- You are early . . .

- Okay, stop talking! Hurry up and feed her. I am hungry and horny. What is for dinner?

Ziba finishes feeding Anahita and gets food on the table for her darling pig, Chingiz.

There is nothing wrong with Chingiz's appetite. He shovels food in his mouth as if there is famine in the country. After dinner, he burps and he belches a few times. He gets up, goes to the bathroom and pees without closing the bathroom door. While he holds on to himself to ensure that urine goes in the toilet bowl, he lets out a few loud and deafening farts.

These are shocking to Ziba. What other talents does this man have? He is a master of surprises to her. That was something new for Ziba. Now her husband stands in front of her and their little daughter and behave like a stupid gorilla.

Anahita, who does not understand these things, laughs at what her father does and thinks his gestures are funny.

The door to the bathroom stays open, Chingiz stands with his back to Ziba and Anahita in front of the toilet bowl with his pants down. One can hear how the urine flows into the toilet

bowl like a running tap.

What is there to say, Ziba thinks. But no matter how she tries, she cannot keep quiet.

She shouts:

- Close the damn door, do you have no shame . . .

- Shut up you whore. This is my house and I do what I want, Chingiz yells out.

Without thinking about Anahita, Chingiz comes out of the toilet and orders Ziba to lie down.

He wants to have sex. He does not care that Anahita is awake. It does not make any difference to him whether the child can understand what goes on or not. He is simply an animal.

Ziba refuses and tells him that as long as Anahita is awake, he should wait.

She was in the middle of formulating her next argument when she got struck in the head. She had not finished what she was going to say, and there came a second blast to the skull. Chingiz punched her in the head.

- You do not lecture me. That is all there is to it, to get lectured by a punk. If you do not want to have sex, I will divorce you and take the child away from you. Lie down, I said! Says Chingiz so furiously that Anahita starts crying.

Ziba who does not have anyone else to turn to and is terrified of getting separated from her baby, says no more and with a massive headache calms Anahita, gets up, goes to bed, takes off her pants while keeping her shirt on and lies down in bed on her back.

Anahita is now calm and playing with her doll. Chingiz gets on top of Ziba and is off to the races.

In the middle of the act, Anahita gets up and crawls toward Ziba. She is too young to understand adults. She perhaps thought that Mom and Dad were playing. She wants to draw their attention to herself. She stands at the foot of the bed and

shouts at her mother. Chingiz, who must concentrate hard to have an orgasm, punches Anahita on the chest so as to get her away from the bed. Anahita falls back, hits the floor, and starts crying. All Chingiz's concentration and effort go to hell.

He has been interrupted so he jumps out of bed while he swears at heavens and earth.

Ziba gets up, holds the frightened child in her arms, and tries to comfort her.

The situation is tense. For the first time since they moved in together, Chingiz had never allowed anything to get in the way of his sexual gratification. Ziba has always pleased him, but now Anahita is there and a mother's love for her child comes before that for her husband particularly for such a husband.

The beast, Chingiz, is more furious and angry than before. There is no way out either for him or for Ziba. He must learn that Anahita is not a baby anymore.

Chingiz gets up and goes to the bathroom. In order to finish what he had started, he masturbates. He needs to get it over with or else he will be restless. He has no shame in behaving like an animal in front of his family. A living organism of this type gives a new meaning to concepts like egotism and narcissism.

Ziba who witnesses all this is paralyzed by horror. She sits on the floor with Anahita in her arms and looks at her useless husband whom she hates more than ever. Her head is spinning. She is going through a very difficult ordeal in her young life. Her eyes are red from crying and the tears keep rolling down her face. The headache is getting worse and worse. Her head is pounding. It is as if someone keeps hitting her in the head with a hammer.

What will become of us?! . . . She asks herself.

After monster Chingiz comes out from the toilet, he puts on

his coat and leaves without a word to Ziba. He goes to a bar. So far, Chingiz has not been taking solace in alcohol. He has had the occasional drinks but it has never been a routine thing for him. He does not tolerate alcohol otherwise he would have turned out to be an alcoholic long ago.

He spends the night there in a bar and drinks a few beers. He drinks five beers that night. He runs into some of his old buddies from the military to whom he opens up and tells his whole life story. But he tells his story in a way that puts him in a favourable light. Complaining about Ziba and describing her as a witch is what he does. All the while, claiming that he has put a lot of efforts into providing a good life for Ziba. In general, he paints a dark picture of Ziba and makes her look like an evil person to his former colleagues. Obviously with those descriptions, they start to hate Ziba and feel sorry for Chingiz.

What they do not know is how much older than Ziba Chingiz is. Since if they only knew about the huge age difference between Chingiz and Ziba, they would have spat in his face. Instead they comfort Chingiz and give him advice on how he should handle the witch.

Spending the night at the bar further exacerbated Chingiz's feelings of anger and irritation. When he came home at five o'clock in the morning, he looked hammered and battered. It was clear that on the way home, he must have fallen a several times, and he must have been puking all over himself. He reeked something awful from the smell of vomit all over his clothes. He could barely stand on his feet. When he opened the door he saw Ziba was up and waiting for him. She had put Anahita to bed but she could not sleep herself.

As soon as Chingiz opens the door and enters, Ziba rushes to his aid and helps him take off his smelly clothes. She wants to take him to the bathroom so that he can wash himself, but he wants to go to bed. Ziba gives up without a fight and lets

him go to bed.

Chingiz, who is unable to nag and swear, falls sleep immediately. He snores so loudly that he wakes up Anahita. He sounds like a bear. Ziba tends to Anahita until she falls sleep, which takes about an hour.

At seven o'clock, the alarm clock goes off. It is time for Chingiz to wake up and get ready to go to work, but he is in such deep sleep, lying like a log in bed with deaf ears, that he does not hear the clock ringing. In the meanwhile, the ones who do wake up are Anahita and poor Ziba who had fallen sleep sitting at the dining table with her hands crossed under her head on the table and her body leaning against the table. When she wakes up she feels pain all over her body. Anahita starts to cry. She gets up and goes to her. She takes her in her arms to calm her down.

Chingiz is in bed in deep sleep. Ziba gets breakfast ready for Chingiz so as to not give him a reason for making trouble when he wakes up while at the same time she feeds Anahita. It is ten o'clock. Ziba does not dare touch Chingiz or wake him up. She does not know in what temperament he will be if he is awakened. Surely, being in a good mood would be out of the question, Ziba thinks. While the monster is sleep, Ziba takes his stinking clothes into the bathroom and washes them. Anahita, she has already fed and put in bed again.

It is almost twelve o'clock before Chingiz wakes up of a headache. He feels horrible, same way as he smells. As soon as he wakes up, he yells

- ZIBAAA, ZIBA . . .

- Yes, yes, what is it? Ziba answers uncomfortably.

- Give me a pain-killer! Hurry!

Ziba enters the kitchenette and gets a tablet and a glass of water. He takes the pill and drinks lots of water to swallow the pill. Ziba stands at the side of the bed waiting for the next order from Lord Chingiz. He gives the glass back to Ziba and

says

- Oh, shit, this was hot water.

Ziba takes the glass and goes back to the laundry without bothering about Chingiz's gracious statement. Chingiz sits in bed for about fifteen minutes. He cannot manage to get up. He has never been hung-over and so badly off in his miserable life. His whole body is aching. He must have fallen several times on the ground on his way home last night. Ziba knew already that she had to dust down all his clothes. The clothes were soiled with dust and mud. Furthermore, they were filthy from vomit stains.

Breakfast table is still spread. Anahita lies comfortably in her crib, sleeping. Chingiz stays in bed and has no energy to get up. Ziba does the laundry. Suddenly, there comes a knock on the door.

- Ziba, Ziba, check who the hell it is! Orders his Majesty Chingiz to his faithful subject.

Ziba leaves the laundry, and stressed by the knocking at the door, opens the door. It is the tailor advising that Chingiz has an important call. It is his wife Kobra.

As soon as Ziba goes to tell him that, Chingiz says

- Yes, I heard it. Damn it, what is it now.

With no clothes on and reeking of his own vomit, he puts on a house-coat and goes along with the tailor. He has no choice but to go and answer the phone. It is Kobra and with her he cannot afford getting into a conflict.

Kobra informs him about yet another accident but this time involving Sam. In a cold and insensitive tone of voice, she tells him that Sam and his family have been killed in a train accident.

In a state of shock, Chingiz sits on a chair by the phone all shaken up. For Kobra, however, this does not constitute a tragic event. After all, she hated Sam with passion. For her, Sam was a disgrace who had blemished her life. Now the

stigma was gone.

Chingiz starts to think;

when was the last time he saw Sam? Many years ago.

But how many years ago, one, five, ten . . . ?

He had no idea. He could not remember when he last saw his son. Sam had broken all ties with Chingiz, Kobra and everyone else, including his mother, for many years. He lived his own life. As soon as he got a chance to break free he jumped at it and fled far away from his unconventional family and relatives who did not give him anything other than misery.

Now his life had come to an abrupt end. Not only his but that of his wife and his adopted child.

Chingiz is drawn back from the past to the present by a rowdy noise on the other end of the phone. It is Kobra shouting at him:

- Hello . . . Chingiz. Can you hear me? Hey! Are you still there? . . .

- Yes, yes, I am here, responds Chingiz after pulling himself together.

- The bodies are at the central hospital. You need to go there to get the bodies and then take them to the funeral house. I have to go now. Bye.

Kobra hangs up before Chingiz gets a chance to respond. She is Chingiz's "student" who has been under his tutelage for too long and has skillfully, mastered the talents of insensitivity and cold-heartedness. Moreover, she never liked Sam. Therefore, there were no reasons for her to mourn his passing.

Frozen in time and motionless, Chingiz remains seated on the chair with the phone still in his hand brooding over the small memories he had of Sam. He is stricken by grief. But the question is what it is that makes him sad. Is it really Sam's death that has touched him so much, or is there something

else at the root of this sorrow?

Chingiz comes home. He is quiet. Not a word out of his mouth, For Ziba, the silence is deafening. He has forgotten how sick he was and cannot feel how badly his body hurts. He sits at the table.

Ziba asks:

- What happened?

No response from Chingiz. He probably does not say anything so as to avoid divulging to Ziba his secret about yet another child, his first born for that matter, whom he fathered by sleeping with a prostitute.

So far, Ziba has had no knowledge of Sam's existence let alone the circumstances surrounding his birth, his childhood, and his life.

Chingiz needs to go to the hospital. He gets up and goes to take a shower. But Ziba says:

- What are you doing? I am in the middle of doing the laundry.

- I need to take a shower. Get this shit out of here! Chingiz answers while he kicks the laundry away with his foot.

- What are you doing? Let me take it, Ziba says furiously. She takes away the laundry and puts it in the sink. Chingiz takes a quick shower in few minutes and comes out. While he is getting dressed, Ziba asks him:

- Where are you going now? You do not feel good. Has something happened?

Ziba gets no response from Chingiz. He does not seem to be listening to her. Instead, he says:

- Give me another pain-killer!

Ziba persists in wanting to know what is going on. She is just as much curious as she is worried. She wonders what has made him get dressed and get going so fast while being in such a bad state of health. She wants to know where he is headed to.

- I asked you where you are going. Can you not even, for once, answer me?

What did she say to you?

- Who? Chingiz asks while pretending not to know to whom Ziba was referring in order to buy some time.

- Kobra of course. The very person who called the tailor . . . By then, Chingiz was dressed and ready to leave. The only thing he was waiting for was a tablet for his headache. He interrupts Ziba and says:

- Where is the tablet? Get it!

Ziba gives him the tablet and a glass of water and then he leaves.

Good God! What have I done to deserve this? Ziba asks her God. The God she believed in. The God she asked for help and gave her confessions to. The God that she hoped to perform miracles for her and turn her dark life into a paradise.

Now she is again alone with her Anahita. She is exhausted after the night's nasty events. She feels tired and sleepy. Now that there is silence in the house, and now that the devil is out there, she can take a nap, she thinks to herself. In order not to leave Anahita alone, she takes her to bed and puts her next to herself.

The bed smells awful. It smells like puke and sweat. Ziba is too tired to bother changing the bed sheets. She wants to sleep. Moreover, the problem is not just the sheets but also Anahita who is not sleepy and feels happy and wants to play. Ziba is in such a state of exhaustion that she falls asleep almost as soon as she lies down.

Anahita is a cute, sweet, little girl with short, light-brown hair, big black eyes, and round, full face. She is playful and happy for the most part.

Since she was not tired, Ziba could not put her in her own bed. Now when she lies down next to Ziba with Ziba's arm

around her waist, the child feels like she is caught in a trap. Ziba is in deep sleep now. Anahita gets herself out of Ziba's grip. She crawls out of bed and sits next to her toys on the floor in the middle of the room.

A child cannot understand what he or she is doing. Children cannot distinguish between good and evil, wrong and right, danger and safety. She takes one of her dolls with her and goes out the front door.

Due to the sense of urgency in whatever Chingiz's case was and everything happening so suddenly and quickly, Ziba must have forgotten to properly close the door behind Chingiz so the door had been left ajar. Anahita leans against the door, "Sesame, open!" The door opens. She creeps out. Chingiz comes home around ten o'clock at night. He sees that the door is ajar. He comes in and yells out Ziba without looking around first.

- Ziba, Ziba.

He sees Ziba lying on the bed. She has just woken up with the sound of his screams.

- Yes, what is it? Asks Ziba without noticing anything.

- Where is Anahita?

- WHAT? No . . . But, Anahita. Anahita?

The house was not so big that one could get lost in it. So it was not long before she realized what must have happened. Ziba starts to panic. She starts to cry while she puts on her shoes to go out and look for her beloved girl. Chingiz goes out with her. They look everywhere in the neighborhood and ask everybody if they have seen a little girl, their daughter Anahita.

She is gone.

- Now SATAN, has there not been enough sorrows already, Chingiz says with his face turned up looking at the sky. It seems as if Chingiz is pleading with God, but in his own way. He seems to be utterly devastated and dispirited by all the

misery that befell him in just one, single day.

These events may have awakened certain feelings in him that he never allowed himself to exhibit. Is it possible that he has now awakened to life and realizes how the feelings of grief and despair wreak havoc in one's life. To lose two of his closest on the same day reminds him of the life he lived as a child. He who grew up without a father. He who did not have a share in life's good fortunes, had instead closed his heart and suppressed his emotions throughout his life so as not to feel any pain, not to understand others' suffering, and not to let anyone torment him.

Chingiz is broken. He sits on the sidewalk and bursts into tears. He cries loud and from the heart.

Ziba, poor Ziba, who has not done anything wrong herself to pay a price for it, gets to suffer from the consequences of Chingiz's wrongdoings in his life up to that point. She is crushed and condemns Chingiz for all he has done to her and her daughter, Anahita.

She stands next to Chingiz, the two of them crying. She wants to go to the police. He is sitting on the ground, crying. People who pass by act differently. Some cross the street to avoid walking past them. Others look the other way for a few seconds while they pass by. Only a few stop and ask what is going on.

A young man in his thirties sees them. He comes up to them and asks:

- What happened?

Chingiz does not even look up. His head is down; he does not feel like talking.

Ziba, who has now found someone who is willing to help, grabs the man's jacket as a gesture to plead with him and beg for help

- Please, my child is missing. Help me find my Anahita!

Please, I am beyond myself. My darling child . . .

- How old is she? How does she look like? The man interrupts Ziba.

- She is twelve months old, large black eyes, light brown hair. What am I gonna do now? Please, for god's sake, help me . . .

- As for her clothes, what was she wearing?

- She had a white T-shirt and a navy skirt. No shoes.

Please . . .

- Sure. I am a police officer. My name is Sayadi. I will help you.

Sayadi is an off-duty police officer, dressed in civilian clothing. He pulls out his walkie-talkie and requests an amber alert to be issued for Anahita based on the descriptions Ziba had provided.

Chingiz, sitting still on the ground, is not moving. Ziba is desperate. She tries, with a heart-wrenching tone of voice, to keep the policeman staying, and get him to help her find Anahita.

The man is willing to help but as long as Chingiz does not move, he must stay. He has called for a police car to get them to the station.

The car is there. Sayadi asks Chingiz courteously to go to the station. Chingiz does not respond. It is a very tense situation. The air is filled with sadness and despair. How will Sayadi get Chingiz to cooperate without causing a squabble? He can tell from Chingiz's facial expressions the pain he is in and he sees how upset and broken he is.

Sayadi wants to help and means well however, he is at a disadvantage. He is completely mistaken in his assumptions about Chingiz's relationship to Ziba. He thinks that Chingiz is Ziba's father and as such, he is heart-broken that his granddaughter is missing. So when he goes to comfort Chingiz and convince him to get up and get in the car, he says

- Come granddad, we will find your grandchild. There is

nothing to worry about. Do not . . .

- Listen you, I am not somebody's grandfather. You do not need to pry into people's private affairs. Mind your own business now. Chingiz interrupts him while he gets up to go toward the car.

Sayadi is dumbfounded and he is now curious. Who is Chingiz then, if he is not, as he says, Anahita's grandfather. For Sayadi, it was not easy to figure out Chingiz's relationship with Ziba. It never even occurred to him that Chingiz might be Ziba's husband.

They get in the cruiser and head to the police station. There is silence in the car for a while before the officer asks

- We have issued an amber alert for Anahita but we need a photo of her. Can you get us a picture of her?

- Yes, if you would be so kind as to drive us home, I have a lot of pictures of my dear and beloved Anahita, Ziba says with a quivering voice from crying.

She was choked with tears. She could not help but cry . . .

Chingiz sits quietly, dead-silent and gazing at the floor. He breathes heavily. He is not young anymore, and after going through so much hardship that life threw at him and those that he created for himself, he was bound to collapse, if he was not already on the verge of so doing.

The officer asks for the address, turns the car around and heads toward their home. They were not far from home, about a quarter of a mile away.

On the way back the officer, who does not know anything about Ziba and Chingiz's relation, asks Ziba

- Where is your husband? Are you not going to inform him?

Ziba was not sure what she should say. She saw how Chingiz reacted when Sayadi called him grandpa. But before she gets a chance to respond, Chingiz replies

- It is not necessary. Just drive! What are you, a cop or a social worker?

The officer, who is also driving the vehicle, does not want to be rude to an older man, and although he is stunned by Chingiz's reaction, he keeps quiet and does not say anything more. He is flabbergasted at the way Chingiz reacted, but not to make matters worse for someone who is obviously in distress, he refrains from further probing into their lives. They have arrived at the house when Ziba sees a man standing at the door with a baby in his arms. It is their neighbor who lives two floors up from them in the same building. Ziba rushes out the car while it is still in motion, slowly approaching the building. She runs toward the man, her heart pounding, as thoughts go through her head: please god, let it be Anahita. She takes a look at the baby and she rejoices at what she sees. It is, indeed, Anahita he is holding in his arms. She cries loud out of joy at having found her daughter, Anahita, while at the same time she takes her in her arms and kisses her face over and over again. Chingiz looks relieved when he finds out that Anahita is safe and sound.

Sayadi, who was dispatched to the location, goes to the man and asks him how he found the girl. He says that he and his wife were at work and when they got home they saw that their children had a new play-mate.

Anahita had simply gone up the stairs to their floor when she had heard the noise of children playing. One of the neighbour's children who had just stepped out of the apartment at that moment saw Anahita in the hallway and as children tend to do, she took her into her apartment and the three of them began to play. But they had no idea where Anahita had come from. They did not know where she lived. They were playing together until their parents came home and realized that they had acquired an extra child. The father then started asking Anahita where she lived and with as little as Anahita could utter, he figured out that she lived two

floors down in the same building. The neighbor then tried to return the child to her parents but no one was home.

In the meanwhile, Ziba and Chingiz were going around frantically looking for Anahita everywhere, searching desperately from one street to another and from one alley to another.

Having guessed that the parents must be out looking for their kid, the caring and considerate neighbor decided to wait at the main entrance until they turn up.

Sayadi gathers all the required details and since the child is back, safe, with her parents, he wraps up his investigation. He goes to Ziba to say goodbye to her. Chingiz had gone in as soon as he had seen that Anahita was O.K. and she was in Ziba's arms.

- So, everything went well. We are glad for your sake. Be careful next time, Sayadi says to Ziba and leaves with his colleagues.

Ziba thanks the neighbour once again and goes in. Chingiz has already crawled into that filthy bed with all his clothes on. He has not even taken his shoes off.

The laundry is in the sink. The house is upside down, it is a complete mess. Ziba does not have the energy to do any tidying up. She puts a blanket on the floor and lies down with Anahita in her arms.

Next day, Chingiz wakes up early in the morning in a fiery rush. He has got to go to work. It does not work to be absent several days in a row. The business owner is a friend of his but even friendship has its limits. He wakes up Ziba and gets her to make breakfast for him while he takes a shower.

Poor Ziba gets up with so much pain in her body, puts a small blanket on Anahita, goes to the kitchenette, and makes tea. She has not slept well. Who would feel rested after sleeping on a blanket on hard, cement-floor without a blanket and a pillow?

She takes out cheese, butter and bread from the little fridge, and puts them on the table. She pours a cup of tea for Chingiz

when he comes out of the shower. Chingiz gets dressed in a big hurry and only takes a cup of tea. He eats none of the things that Ziba put on the table.

They say nothing to each other. Chingiz goes to work. Ziba would much rather go back to sleep but she has a lot to do. She changes the bed sheets and does the laundry. Half a day is spent on house chores along with caring for and feeding Anahita.

It must be three o'clock in the afternoon when the door bell rings. She opens the door. She cannot believe her eyes. It is Hussein, her uncle.

She is happy to see him. As soon as he comes in, Ziba hugs him and starts crying. She has found a shoulder to cry on. It is as if she has seen her guardian angel.

Hussein asks

- What is it child? Has something new happened that I should know?

- What can I say? Where do I start Uncle Hussein? I suffer. I am withering away in this life. What have I done that god punishes me so hard? This is not fair, Ziba says in a rough voice.

It is November 1966. November, a month that ushers in coldness, darkness, and depression. That coincides with exactly how Ziba feels. She is like a beautiful flower that blossomed in a wrong season and as such, is doomed to wither with each passing day.

Hussein wants her to tell him everything that had happened since they last met.

After Ziba tells him the whole story, Hussein advises her that she should hang in there until he gets a hold of her parents. In order not to cause more problems for Ziba than what she already had Hussein cuts his visit short and leaves quickly.

He did not want Chingiz to see him in his house. It was clear how he would react if he were to see Hussein there.

Chingiz went to work that day despite everything that had happened to him. While at work, he had called Kobra to see if she knew anything about the funeral. She had replied that the funeral was to be held the following week on Thursday at the church cemetery. She had also pointed out that she was going to be busy that day and could not come. Chingiz knew too well why she said that. Kobra had no feelings for Sam. For her, Sam never existed. He felt like a burden to her.

In the evening when Chingiz comes home he notices that the house is tidy and clean. The table is set and the smell of food from the kitchen has filled the room with its wonderful aroma.

He is hungry. He does not want to be insensitive. That is why he greets Ziba gently when he comes in and asks

- How is Anahita doing?

- Good, thanks. She feels well and has been playing all day long. I put her to bed early so we can eat in peace and quiet, responds Ziba looking happy but deep down inside upset and worried about how Chingiz will behave.

Chingiz takes off his coat and puts it directly by the table.

It is a calm and peaceful dinner.

After dinner when Ziba is busy sewing Chingiz's jacket and Chingiz is drinking his tea, Ziba wants to ask him about what really had happened that night when he came home so drunk. Ziba knew that Chingiz is almost an alcoholic. In general he rarely drinks too much but in fact his body is not capable of tolerating even a small amount of alcohol, so as soon as he goes over the limit of what his body can handle, he gets sick and he feels miserable.

Ziba does not want to fight. She thinks things through carefully. She hopes for a resolution. Maybe Uncle Hussein is her only hope, but hope for what?

What if she gets divorced from Chingiz?

Can she go back to her parents?

Is it possible to live with them again?

What will people say about that?

Saaïd will surely blame me and say that it served me right after what I did to him.

What will happen with Anahita? Can she take with her or will Chingiz try to separate them?

What should I say to Anahita when she is grown up? She will surely ask about her father. She would want to know

who her father is or was. And I am not even sure if he is going to be alive by then.

Oh . . . what a life. What should I do . . . ?

- Ziba I want to talk to you, Chingiz breaks Ziba's thoughts and continues.

- Yes, it is just that I have to go to a funeral next week. One of my nearest has died in an accident.

- Who? Ziba asks curiously wondering who it could be. This is the first time Chingiz is talking about his family.

It is difficult for Chingiz to talk about Sam. But he must somehow do just that. He believes, the more he turns and twists things, the more shocking it would be for Ziba. So he starts like this

- It is difficult to explain. How should I begin? Sam, his wife and his daughter died in a train accident on the way back from their vacation.

The name does not ring a bell for Ziba. Who is Sam? She knows no Sam. The fact is that she does not know anyone from her husband's side of the family, except Kobra whose name she has heard many times.

- Who is Sam, asks Ziba, hoping to get some answers this time.

- Yes, it is a bit complicated. You know that I am much older than you. (As if that was news to Ziba). And naturally, I had a past before I married you.

Chingiz feels being caught between the rock and a hard place. It's always embarrassing and difficult to explain such things even if one is insensitive, cold, and brazen. But he has now decided to tell it as it is. So he continues

- I had mentioned that I have another wife named Kobra. But before I married her, I had a child with another girl.

Ziba is dead silent and listening. She is not mad or angry. In light of everything that has happened, she has become accustomed to and prepared for hearing and seeing very

strange and shocking things from Chingiz. To ensure that Chingiz does not repent and stop to talk, she sits and listens intensively.

Chingiz sees how he has got Ziba's full attention. He sees how Ziba is sitting still and listening to him like a child whose father is about to tell her an interesting, funny, and exciting story. Chingiz is in a talkative mood and wants to once and for all put an end to this secrecy.

Therefore, he tells her the whole truth about Sam, Kobra, Saaid, and Sara.

But Chingiz describes things in a way that would make Ziba feel sorry for him. In telling his sobbing story, he portrays himself as an innocent, helpless person who had no choice in the matter. A man whose fate was meant to be nothing more than sad moments and painful events.

He even talks about his parents and siblings.

Now Ziba knows almost everything about Chingiz since he has still not divulged anything about him frequenting the brothels nor has he revealed who Sam's mother really was. It is one-thirty in the morning. Both Chingiz and Ziba are exhausted. Neither one has the stamina to further dwell on the subject. But Ziba's disappointment was more than evident. She knew now what she really got herself into. Who Chingiz was then and who he is now have become clearer for Ziba. What is done is done, thinks Ziba. I have been dragged into all this so far.

The week draws to a close and in those remaining days nothing special happens. Chingiz is quieter and more sober. Is his state of being due to the fact that he has shared his secrets with Ziba and now she has got something on him? Hardly! Chingiz is not afraid of such things. He has nothing to lose. Maybe he has not yet got over what happened to Sam and Anahita the other day.

On Friday, it is time for Ziba to give Chingiz the weekly

household-budget report and go through an item-by-item review of all the purchases and household expenses with Chingiz. It is on Fridays that Ziba has to show him all the receipts for every single purchase and to receive next week's household allowance.

She has to write down everything she buys in a list form in a book like this:

Monday, November 25, 1966

milk 1 package \$3

sugar 1 package \$2

salt 1 package \$1

...

...

...

It is the tyrant who has dictated that she must keep a detailed and accurate account of all the expenditure paid from that pathetic, measly, household weekly-allowance.

Ziba has no choice. She has to follow the dictator's rules and regulations in order not to be punished.

Another Friday comes along. Ziba has been very upset and aggravated ever since the night Chingiz let her in on the dark secrets of his past. Now she knows with certainty that Kobra is a part of his life as are a few others. At the same time, she feels sorry for what happened to Sam but the outrage she feels is beyond belief now that she is better aware of her husband's background, at least to the extent Chingiz blurted out, (how would she feel if she knew about Chingiz's "bad habits"?).

Chingiz wants Ziba to give him the weekly report on the household expenses. He is completely nonchalant about exposing his past to Ziba. He does not want to lose face. They sit at the table and go through the spending. Chingiz criticizes certain purchases and thinks they are luxury items that were not needed.

The whole thing is ridiculous. I have to be a fool to comply with everything he says, Ziba says under her breath. Who in the world does he think he is? I must say my piece. The son of a bitch has deceived me and my family to no end of tomorrow. No, now I would either speak my mind or keep my mouth shut for the rest of my life.

She seems to have made up her mind about putting up a real fight. As soon as Chingiz starts to whine, he is interrupted by Ziba

- Now, come on! What I have bought is a necessity that had to be purchased. I am sick of the way you treat me. I think whatever you could not do to Kobra, you do to me. I want to

Chingiz raises his hand and gives her a hard slap in the face. Chingiz has once again struck her and stopped her from speaking up, but this time is different. Ziba has found the courage to stand up to him.

This time, she is not going to take it quietly without giving Chingiz a piece of her mind.

- You son of a bitch, I am sick and tired of your condescending attitude. I am not your slave, you hear me you fucking pig.

She screams so loud that Anahita who is sitting on the floor and playing with her toys bursts into tears. The kerfuffle has frightened her not so much for what she grasps of the situation but by the unpleasantness of her surrounding.

Chingiz is taken aback by Ziba's reaction. Perhaps he thought he had a free rein over Ziba forever. He also fears that the conflict might escalate and end up outside the house before the neighbors and strangers, at which point he knows he will become the laughing stock of the whole world and seen as a villain due to the massive age difference between the two of them.

No one will have any sympathy for him when they see how

an old man has destroyed a young girl's life, and should they find out about his background, he is sure to be condemned by all.

On the other hand, he does not want to lose ground. But by the same token, he does not want to lose Ziba either. He seems to be at a cross-road since what he wants to accomplish seems to be in conflict with one another. After all, you cannot both love and hate someone at the same time. He must give Ziba some breathing room. She is a part of his life. He does not want to go back to Kobra now that he has got a taste of "caviar."

Ziba cries. She curses Chingiz for everything he has done to her.

Chingiz tries to think of a way to put fear in her and thus to silence her. He must find Ziba's weak point. He is skeptical that the threat of divorce would be effective. But since he cannot think of anything else at that moment, he decides to use it and says

- Listen up, if you want to leave, go! Kobra was right to say that you were an ungrateful bastard who just wanted to use me. If you are tired of this life, pack your fucking things and get out!

Ziba thinks for a few minutes. Now this is serious. Where would she go if she gets separated? She is not sure whether Chingiz is bluffing or being serious. Therefore, she does not dare call his bluff. In order not to lose control of the situation entirely, she responds tearfully

- You are cruel. You have no morals. Where should I go and Anahita . . .

I did not say that you can take Anahita with you. I said you can go, Chingiz says cold-heartedly.

Chingiz comes across as a tough, cold, guy with a heart of stone but deep down inside he dreads the day that Ziba leaves him.

Ziba who realizes that Anahita will be taken from her becomes extremely spooked. She could never imagine leaving her child, especially in the hands of a moron like Chingiz.

With this threat hanging over her head, Ziba becomes completely silent and does not make a sound.

Chingiz sees how she retreated and as such, he is confident that he has now discovered Ziba's weakness which he can use to keep her saddled and obedient for many years to come. It is Anahita whom she loves and for whom she is willing to sacrifice everything even her own life.

Now that once again Chingiz has defeated his opponent, he goes right back to where they started and with a victorious look on his face, he tells Ziba

- Now, you do as I say! Or else God knows . . .

Like a prey caught in the predator's clutches, she goes through the list of household purchases without another word. Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday . . . And there comes Thursday, the day that Chingiz has to attend Sam's funeral. He is now almost over the whole thing compared to the day he heard about it. He must carry on. He cannot afford to dwell on it too long. Sure, he felt sorry about what had happened, but his sadness had nothing to do with Sam per se, rather it had everything to do with him. He is afraid of dying. He is old. For him it is obvious that he does not have a lot of years left. And that scares him to death.

One problem he must face today and have the courage to endure is encountering the grieving relatives and friends who will attend the service. He must meet with them face to face. Chingiz does not even know if Sam's mother is alive or not. There is not going to be a sacred and religious atmosphere at the funeral, at least not for Chingiz.

Like every other day Chingiz goes to work, but before leaving, he reminds Ziba that he will be going to the funeral

later that afternoon. He also says that he will not be coming home for lunch.

Ziba takes this opportunity and as soon as Chingiz is gone, she gets ready and an hour later she is on her way to visit her uncle, Hussein. She has not heard anything from him and is worried about what Hussein has done; whether he has contacted her parents or not.

Hussein who rejoices at seeing Ziba would rather avoid her questions in order not to make her more disappointed than she already is. Ziba asks repeatedly if there were any new developments and if he has had a chance to speak with her parents, but Hussein keeps changing the subject and talks about issues that have nothing to do with what she is asking. Finally, when Ziba sees how Hussein dances around the issue, she interrupts him and asks

- Uncle Hussein, what is it? Why don't you answer my question?

Hussein can no longer avoid the subject since Ziba is adamant to find out what is going on so in a sympathetic way he says

- Dear child! I spoke with your parents a few days ago. Your mother, who is my own SISTER, explicitly stated that I should not meddle in your life. She added that you have no other alternatives. This was your own choice and you have to live with your husband. She advised that if you were to ever get separate, you have to take care of yourself on your own. This came as quite a blow to Ziba. She knew that her mother was not happy about her marriage, but after all it was not she who bore the full responsibility for that. Her mother and father were equally guilty as she herself, or perhaps even more. Only if her father had not agreed to it. Only if he had not given his blessing and approval. Only if he had not gone through with this in the hopes that Chingiz would help him financially and with finding employment for him. Or if the

mother had at all cared about her daughter and was concerned about her welfare instead of that of her own and her dear husband, this would have never had to happen.

Children are bound to err but it is the parents, the adults, who are supposed to protect them, guide them, and prevent them from ruining their lives. What are parents for if they cannot love and protect their children from harm? If they cannot draw from their own experiences and mistakes to put their children on the right path in life? If they cannot pave the way for their children to succeed?

Alas, that is not the case in Ziba's life. The mother is an egoistic woman who only thinks of herself and the father is an ambivalent man who cannot distinguish between right and wrong. He is like a worker-bee who keeps drudging day in and day out to provide for his queen. That is the only thing he is good for. And much in the same way that a worker bee would sacrifice its life for its queen, so would he.

Ziba is crushed. She is reeling from the shock. Her only hope to turning to her family for help is dashed. She cannot even cry any more. There are no tears left to cry with.

It shows in her face how tired she is of all the agony she has gone through in her life. She is at the end of her rope.

She heads back to her house, the so-called home, a place that never felt like home to her. She is emotionally drained. On the way back, she thinks of everything she has been through. She remembers how things were before. She thinks of her Saaid and her love for him. Of the simple life she destroyed and allowed her parents to destroy.

On the other side of town, there is Chingiz who ponders about his own problems. Soon, he will have to meet a lot of people. People who either do not know him or hate him. He first contemplates not going there at all. What reason does he have to be there for? He had not seen Sam for a long time and most of the people at the funeral must have known about that

too. God knows how Sam must have described his father to others. He might not have mentioned him at all or he may have alleged that his father was dead. Chingiz had absolutely no role in Sam's life. He was not at his graduation ceremony. He was not at his wedding. Upon reflection, he noticed that he was never invited to any celebrations in Sam's life.

Well, what can be done in such cases? Well, not much but perhaps to stay away. He is dead now and there is nothing he can do about it. Moreover, what if he runs into Sam's in-laws?

No, I do not want to go there. Forget it. He was nevertheless an illegitimate child, says Chingiz to himself, sitting alone in the shoe store, after thinking things through.

At home Ziba is busy cooking dinner. She knows that when Chingiz comes in he will certainly want dinner. She feeds Anahita and plays with her after she is finished with cooking. They have no TV. The cheapskate husband of hers has not got one for them.

Ziba enjoys reading. The newspapers Chingiz reads and leaves at home, Ziba picks up and reads through them, article by article and on a fast pace. She has an inquisitive mind. So now when she has time to read, thanks to Chingiz not coming home early, she sits at the table and reads to her heart's content. Suddenly she sees an interesting ad about a job in a sewing factory where they need people on contract who can work from home and sew few pieces a week for them. Ziba hides away the newspaper to contact them later. Chingiz comes home much earlier than expected. As luck would have it, Ziba was busy dusting and tidying up at that moment. She was almost done with her chores.

As soon as Chingiz comes in Ziba asks

- You are early! Were you not . . .

- Yep, but the hell with it. I need food in my stomach, what is for dinner? Chingiz cuts her off so as to avoid discussion,

while he takes Anahita in his arms, who had happily gone up to him shouting "DADDY, DADDY."

Ziba sets the table for him and serves him his dinner. It was fortunate that Ziba had thought about making dinner. She is getting to know Chingiz's routine pretty well.

After Chingiz is full, he asks

- Have your parents tried to contact you so far?

Ziba is alarmed by the question. She is worried that someone spied on her and informed Chingiz where she went. She was mystified. What would be a sensible answer now? Should she honestly say what she has done or should she say nothing and see what happens next.

What she is unaware of is that Chingiz's question had to do with what had preoccupied him all day that is, the thoughts of his own relationship with Sam hence, the relationship between parents and children. His question is nothing more than pure curiosity to see if her parents are just as heartless as he has been toward his own children particularly, Sam.

Ziba cannot afford taking too long to answer him. She has got to say something.

- No, you scared them away. Don't you remember that? Ziba answers irately and sarcastically.

- All right, don't get paranoid now! If they wanted you, they would have kept you and stopped you from getting married to me. Chingiz says in the hope of having pulled the rug from under her so that she could not make a come back.

The answer felt like a beheading in which the executioner does not let the condemned person say his/her final word and cut his/her neck with a single stroke so that the head falls to the ground and blood streams out like a waterfall.

He was totally right though. If Mom and Dad cared a bit about her, under no circumstances would they have ever agreed to this marriage.

It is heart breaking for Ziba to be reminded of that from yet

another person in the same day. First Uncle Hussein tells her what her mother had said, and now Chingiz who adds insult to injury.

Chingiz says no more. He knows how he has hit a nerve with her. He is good at stepping on people's toes.

Heated arguments get Chingiz sexually excited. It is normal for Chingiz's brutish impulses to manifest themselves in the aftermath of a quarrel. His brain does nothing more than to think about sex, the desire for which takes over his body completely. The shuddering throughout his body is a cry for intercourse and sexual pleasure.

He turns to Ziba and says

- No, it's time to sleep. I am tired.

It means that everyone must sleep. He is like that. If he wants to sleep so should Ziba and Anahita and all lights must be turned off. They only have one room. There is no other room where Ziba and Anahita can go and spend time in case they are not sleepy.

Chingiz takes off his clothes and goes to bed naked. Ziba suspects that he wants to have sex that he crawled into bed so fast and without pajamas. She puts Anahita in bed and goes to wash the dishes. She ignores Chingiz and lets him wait in the hope that he would fall asleep due to being exhausted.

Immediately after she turns around and goes to the kitchen to start washing the dishes, Chingiz yells out

- Hey you came to bed. I am more important than the fucking dirty dishes.

For Ziba, it is just a matter of putting away the dishes, taking off her clothes and jumping into bed with him. Unfortunately, her plans failed. He is horny. Therefore, she is not going to get any sleep until he is satisfied.

Poor Anahita is resting calmly in a deep sleep this time and will not have to go through the bitter experience of being struck by her father like the last time.

The next day, Friday, when Chingiz goes to work, Ziba gets herself and Anahita ready and goes out to make the phone call regarding that ad for the job she saw in the newspaper. She cannot call from the shops in the area or from the telephone kiosk at the junction. She knows that she is monitored by some of the neighbors. She goes a few blocks away and finds a public phone.

Over the phone, she gets details on what the job entails. But the employer wants to meet her for an interview.

First Ziba thinks that it perhaps was not such a good idea.

How would she get there to their office? But then she thinks that she must turn things around and rebuild her life. She cannot rely on Chingiz. He is evil and ruthless. He is not going to be any support for either her or Anahita. In addition, he is too old and he does not have much time left till death. When he turns eighty years old, for example, she will be only thirty-six years old. So it is best to think about her future now before it gets worse than it already is.

Ziba agrees to an appointment for Monday at ten in the hope that all goes well and Chingiz goes to work since one never knows what Chingiz's plans are from one day to another. In the evening Chingiz comes home and the first question he asks is

- Where were you today?

Ziba knows someone has snitched. It must have been one of his spies in the neighbourhood. Since she did have a heads up about this, thanks to the idiot Chingiz who himself had revealed that he had asked people to keep an eye on her, she was not apprehended by panic and responded

- Anahita was not feeling well so I took her to the pharmacist over in the next block. Have I committed any crime? Would his lordship want to punish me now? By all means, your lordship, lynch me for my sins!

Chingiz sees how Ziba has started to talk back at him in the same bold fashion that he speaks to her. He is not happy about the change in Ziba's behaviour. He knows that sooner or later she will try to get tough with him. Chingiz realizes how smart and energetic this woman is. That is what scares Chingiz. He is aware of how, in time, his stance will become weaker. He is only getting older while Ziba is flourishing into a young woman. With this in mind, he must sometimes

swallow his pride and instead enjoy the moments he still has with his young wife.

To change the subject from what Ziba said, Chingiz responds

- You are becoming quite a comedian. I do not know, you might have a lover. Or maybe you go to your family and learn a lot . . .

- Listen to yourself. You have committed all the world's sins and believe that everyone is as rotten as you, Ziba interrupts him to highlight that everything has its limits.

Chingiz threatens once again to divorce her and to take Anahita away from her. But Ziba does not keep quiet and says

- No, You won't dare file for divorce. You know that you can't find someone like me, young and fresh. You are old and a used product. There is no one who wants you anymore. Not even your dear Kobra . . .

That was it for Chingiz. He takes off his belt and goes to her. He flogs Ziba something awful. He keeps beating her with the belt all over her body. Ziba tries to flee from him, but there is nowhere to escape to. A small room where Ziba is stuck in its corner and must receive every lash of the tyrant's belt.

She screams and cries of pain. Anahita panics and starts crying out loud. She does not understand the situation but she gets afraid by the screaming and yelling of the adults.

Chingiz gives her a good beating while swearing at her and her entire family. Ziba begs for forgiveness, and expresses regret over everything she said.

When Chingiz gets tired from beating her, he goes and sits down. Ziba cries. The pain in her shoulder, back, and tailbone is excruciating. She is distraught and feels numb.

There is a heavy atmosphere. A feeling of hatred and abhorrence fill the room with their dark colors. No one is making a sound but Anahita who is crying incessantly, sitting

on the floor, and looking at Ziba. She is scared.

Ziba sits hunched over by the wall. She breathes heavily and cries quietly.

Chingiz is out of breath. It is not good for him at his age to be fuming like that. It can cost him dearly. But when one is unfair and wants to keep his supremacy intact, one must fight for it even if it costs him his own life.

After the incident, Chingiz goes out, but before he leaves he turns around to Ziba and says

- I will file for divorce on Monday. You can go to hell.

After he leaves, Ziba gets up despite the pain all over her body. She holds Anahita in her arms to calm her down. She lies down with Anahita in her arms and goes into deep thoughts. Her ears are ringing. Her head is exploding and her body is bursting with rage. Her blood pressure is so high that she hears how fast the heart pumps the blood from one side to the other. She can hear how her heart pounds heavily in her chest.

- It is awful that we have to have quarrels and fights every single fucking day. Poor thing, why did I allow you to come into this cruel life? Why did I put you through the misery I created for myself, she says to Anahita.

There is no sign of Chingiz all weekend. Ziba is certain that he is at Kobra's. But she could not care less. All she is concerned about is to find a way out of this hole which she has to call home.

What is interesting is that Ziba does not know that Chingiz cannot afford moving to a larger apartment. He is in debt up to his eyeballs and cannot do anything about it. Ziba knows nothing since Chingiz's mail goes to Kobra's address.

Chingiz has not changed his address to the apartment where he lives with Ziba; rather he is still registered at Kobra's address.

Poor Ziba does not even wonder why there are no mails for

Chingiz. She is too young and inexperienced to understand such matters.

Ziba is worried about what Chingiz said about the divorce. Since he did not show up at night and because she suspects that Chingiz is more than likely staying at Kobra's, she is worried that Kobra would encourage him to go for divorce. Yet Ziba could not do a thing about that. All she could do was to wait and see what unpleasant surprises fate would have for her.

Ziba and Anahita spend two days alone. Thanks to Chingiz's absence, Ziba manages to catch up with her household chores and even fixing the clothes that she had put away.

Sunday afternoon Mr. Chingiz arrives at his palace. He steps in and waits for Ziba to greet him. Ziba, who is busy reading Friday's newspaper, lifts her head up and looks at him for a moment but just as quickly draws her gaze back to the newspaper. Anahita, however, runs to her father making noises and wanting to be held by him. Chingiz lifts her up and in response to her greeting gives her a kiss. Chingiz, who sees how indifferent Ziba has been toward him, says

- Hey, YOU! Have you not missed me? Don't you want to know where I have been? Or have you learned your lesson now?

Ziba completely ignores him. She does not even look at him to let him see her confident, though deep down inside she is afraid that he might soon lose his temper, which can lead to physical abuse again.

- You are insolent you! It appears that you did not believe me when I said I would go to the court tomorrow and put an end to this marriage. You know what happens then. You lose me and Anahita . . .

Ziba interrupts him here because she knows he is right. The fact that she has no employment and no residence and that she is a minor, she would not be given the custody of

Anahita. And that would be too painful for her to handle. Therefore, she says

- Chingiz, you disappear for two days without reason. We can talk to each other. Why must we quarrel all the time? Why can't we be more reasonable? I love you. You are my husband and I have no one else but you. Do you hate me so much? Do you really want to get rid of me?

She says this with tears in her eyes. She is upset and scared. She gives her life for Anahita. She is the only reason that keeps Ziba going. Now when parents and relatives are driven away because of Chingiz and now when she knows that she has to struggle with this monster of a husband all alone and by herself, she does not want to lose Anahita on top of everything else.

- No, I love you. You are my angel. But you have to be obedient to me without question. Otherwise, I cannot protect you. It is like this that a good marriage can go on, says Chingiz satisfactorily by what he heard from Ziba.

That evening all goes well. Chingiz is pleased and thinks that Ziba has received a wake-up call. Ziba, on the other hand, is happy that she could make him calm down.

So far, Ziba has not mentioned anything about her desire to move into a bigger apartment. But she knows that this is not a good time to bring up the subject of changing the apartment. Moreover, that is no longer her first priority since she is more preoccupied with the thoughts of getting a job now. So far, she has managed to put a meager saving together by taking a little from the measly weekly allowance Chingiz gives her which she uses for telephone, bus ticket, and other personal necessities.

Chingiz wakes up in the middle of the night and wants to make love, (sorry, to have sex . . . - For him the word love is a foreign word). He gets on top of her without any warning. Ziba, who was in deep sleep, sees in her dream that she has

crawled into a white cement duct and has got stuck in the middle of the tube. She cannot crawl forward or backward in the tube. She is being suffocated and it feels as if the tube shrinks in diameter and presses her more and more together. She wakes up of pain and fear and finds Chingiz lying on top of her like a log and about to get on with his business without even thinking that she must first take off her pants.

- Wait! What are you doing? Let me take off my pants, says Ziba furiously.

Chingiz does what he wants to do. And as usual, not giving a damn about Ziba, he lies down and goes to sleep afterward. Early in the morning Chingiz wakes up and Ziba has to fix him breakfast.

She feels tired and sore after the abuse she suffered the night before. But having an appointment today with the employer at the clothing factory, she must see to it that Chingiz goes to work; as well, she must get herself ready and get to the appointment.

Her body is aching all over, which is a reminder of the kindness of her beloved husband. She still has some scars left. She has plenty of bruises on her body. She is still black and blue in the face from the beating she got last.

When Chingiz is on his way out, he leaves twenty dollars on the table and says

- Do not forget to show me last week's shopping list tonight. We did not go through it last Friday.

- Sure, sure, Ziba says to avoid arguing and to get him out of the house.

It is possible that something drastic can happen that could have a big impact on him and get him to change his attitude. No, it is impossible. What could be more drastic than Sam's death and Anahita's disappearance? There is absolutely nothing that can ever make Chingiz change his way of life. Ziba goes to the address she was given over the phone to

meet with the employer. It is a clothing factory located outside the town in the suburb in which several hundred people work.

When she arrives, the man who is supposed to meet with her cannot believe his eyes. A very young woman with a toddler has taken the trouble in this cold weather to come all the way out to the suburb to look for a job.

Ziba, who liked the voice she heard over the phone the first time she called, is further pleased when she meets the guy in person and finds out that her instinct was right about him.

- Hi, I'm Ziba who spoke with you on the phone about the ad, she says with a smile.

- Hi, I am Ramin. Where do you live? You must be quite a way from home! Is this your child? Ramin asks nonstop out of pure curiosity.

He is puzzled that such a young and beautiful girl has a kid and that she has traveled such a long stretch by city buses in the hope of getting this job.

- If you had said where you lived, I would have come to you instead. It must be difficult to take city buses in this weather especially with a child, continues Ramin.

It seems that Ramin already likes Ziba. At times, one tends to get attracted to another person without any reasons. It is not love, no, it is not love at first sight, but a kind of affection one feels for someone else.

Moreover, Ziba is not so bad looking either. She is a beautiful and an attractive girl who has had absolutely no luck with regard to her choice of a life-partner.

Ramin is a student who is in his last year of studying psychology. He studies by correspondence and works full time to pay for his education.

He is twenty years old, a hundred and eighty-five centimeters long, dark hair, handsome guy with black eyes and a well-built figure. His voice has a mature tone that touches the

heart of any girl who hears him talk.

As soon as he opens his mouth they all listen to his sweet voice. Ramin is very observant. He did notice Ziba's battered face. He noticed the expression of pain in Ziba's face when he shook hand with her. She has a sore arm, thanks to the generosity of the man who gave her quite a beating without holding anything back.

- I am here to work as seamstress. What is it . . .

- Yes, I know. Come, let me show you the place. Would you like something to drink? And Ramin continues;

- Are you married?

He has not even got an answer to his first question when he asks the next one. He is all ears though and he is dying to find out more about Ziba.

Ziba has no objections to see such a nice guy being interested to know her better. She takes it as a compliment. This was not worse than those first few days when she met that creature, Chingiz, who actively pursued her. The damned days that she rather forget and wish she could erase from her life's diary.

In order not to upset Ramin and make him wait longer, Ziba answers all his questions but she keeps them short and sweet

- Yes, I am married. This is my child, Anahita. I live far from here and I'm seventeen years old.

Ramin laughs and says

- Sorry, I did not want to pry into your life. I did not mean to be discourteous and so forward.

- No, don't worry about it! I have nothing against it, answers Ziba cheerfully.

After Ramin takes Ziba on a tour of the factory and explains to her what the job entails, he asks Ziba

- Well, what do you think? Do you think you can deal with sewing and be happy with this type of work? I can assure you that we will help you with resources.

- Yes, it seems to be alright. I only have one problem which I am not sure how to solve.

- What can it be?

- Sewing machine. I have none at home and it is not cheap to buy one. I do not have any money to buy something like that. Ramin does not ask the typical question of whether her husband could get her a sewing machine. With her broken body and black and blue face, it is not hard for Ramin to get the picture that her husband must be a pig.

So far, Ramin has not dared asking Ziba about those black and blue spots on her skin. Although, it is obvious whose handy work it must be.

- What do you say we give you a good sewing machine? Says Ramin.

He knows that it is possible to make an exception and get a sewing machine for her. There are already a number of those in stock, which are in good condition and which are not needed by anyone at the moment.

The proposal makes Ziba so happy that to thank Ramin she hugs him and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

Ramin thought it was sweet of Ziba to thank him like that but because they are at workplace, he acts cautiously and behaves professionally.

Ziba realizes how she openly displayed her interest in Ramin. She steps back at once and says

- Oops, sorry. My dream came true. I reacted out of joy and I did not mean anything by it.

- Not at all. Shall we go to the office, get a sewing machine for you, and write up the contract?

Ziba signs a contract which would have her sew material sent to her from factory on order at home. The material for each order is to be delivered to her at home. In addition, the company is to pick up the finished works from Ziba's house upon Ziba's notice of completion.

The more she sews the more money she earns.

According to the contract she stands to earn ten dollars per garment, which is more than sufficient for her. She looks forward to earning big money from this.

As she gets ready to leave, Ramin offers her a ride. He knew that she would not be able to carry that heavy sewing machine that she just received while also carrying her baby who she had brought along with her.

Ziba had absolutely nothing against him giving her a ride, although she knew that the neighbors would certainly snitch on her. Ziba is so excited that she could not care less about anything else at that moment.

He, on the other hand, is not as innocent as he looks. He has fallen for Ziba. Right from the start and during that short meeting, a certain kind of friendship began to flourish between them. They both appear to be drawn to each other. On the way home Ramin can no longer contain his curiosity and asks Ziba

- Can I ask you a question?

Ziba is sitting with Anahita on the back seat and thinks about what she should do. Should she ask Ramin to drop them off at the intersection when they are there or keep driving through the alley all the way up to the building? She is afraid that those who have promised Chingiz to keep an eye on her will see Ramin and make a mountain out of a mole. God knows what Chingiz would do to her if he gets to hear this.

- Sorry? What did you say? She is so wrapped up in her own thoughts that she did not hear Ramin.

- Well, I wonder if I could ask you a personal question.

- Sure!

- You might think that I am being nosy. I do not want to be rude but I wonder how you got your bruises. Does your husband beat you?

Now these are sensitive questions Ramin asks. Ziba knew

that sooner or later he would ask her about it. The black eye for example, is clearly visible on her face. There was nothing she could do to hide it or cover it with something. No amount of make up would have helped disguise it.

She does not want to be impolite. Anyone looking at her will know that these bruises are nothing but signs of abuse.

Therefore, for once, she confides in a total stranger and says it like it is

- Yes, my husband is a pig who beats me up almost every day without any reason. He is much older than me. He is sixty-six years old. I wrecked my life when I agreed to marry him.

Ramin is saddened by what he hears while at the same time he feels anger towards the man who inflicts pain on such a beautiful and soft creature. A woman who any other man, who would be lucky enough to have her, would have worshiped.

- I'm sorry. But from now on, you do not have to be worried. If you need anything, you now have a friend to turn to if you would have me as your friend. What is the name of the man who did this to you?

Ramin's promise of friendship and his pledge to support her in the future warms her heart and for the first time the tears of joy fall from her beautiful brown eyes. She has been miserable and deprived of all her freedom. She has been robbed of her pride, dignity and innocence. She sighs of relief when she hears Ramin mention the word friendship and shows her the compassion she so badly needs during these difficult times of her life.

- Yes, thanks, I am alone in this cruel world. My so-called "husband" Chingiz was the only one I had until today. May I ask you to drop us off at the junction and not drive up to the entrance? Chingiz has asked some people in the neighbourhood to keep an eye on where I go and what I do and report back to him.

- Sure, but how are you going to take the sewing machine with you. It is heavy.

- You are right. Let's go. I may well pay the price. If he finds out that a young man has dropped me off at the house, he will let me have it real good.

Ramin who hears this, changes his mind and would rather let her get off at the junction. He does not want her to suffer inadvertently due to a good deed that someone else wanted to do for her. Ramin who knew that he would have to come by once in a while to bring the sewing orders to her asks her

- How are we going to do this then when I have to drop off sewing materials for you?

Ziba who does not see a way out convinces Ramin that this is not the end of the world and she might as well take the risk.

Besides, there would have been no other way for her to carry the sewing machine with her all the way to the house.

Ramin leaves her and Anahita and decides to come back in two days with the material.

Ziba hides the sewing machine under the bed. She did not want Chingiz to know anything about this. She is determined to earn a living so as build a future for her and Anahita.

In the evening Chingiz comes home and as he had ordered in the morning, he wants to look at last week's accounts.

Ziba notices that the neighbourhood watchdogs had not blabbed anything to him, or else this blood-sucking vulture would have asked her who she was with that day and where she had been. First, she would have got a beating and then she would have been interrogated.

From that evening on, Ziba decides not to argue with Chingiz anymore and avoid getting into conflicts with him. She also drops the whole conversation about getting a new apartment for the time being. That subject is something that she can bring up much later when she has acquired some level of financial stability to rely on.

Now Ziba has found a pillar of support in her life, Ramin, whom she can trust. It has been a long while since anyone has afforded her any sympathy or shown her any kindness. Ever since she married Chingiz, she has not felt anything other than hatred and malice directed at her.

Ramin is somewhat drawn to Ziba. He probably feels sorry for such a young and beautiful girl who has to live such a horrible life in her best years. Ramin is going to be a psychologist soon and his knowledge in that field might have had something to do with him understanding Ziba's pain and feeling sympathetic towards her.

The next day, Ramin drops off the necessary material at Ziba's. He personally delivers the stuff to Ziba although there are staff whose job include performing that function. He and Ziba had determined in advance when he should come by to avoid running into Chingiz.

From that day on, Ramin shows up once a week with or without sewing material and order.

Chingiz could not care less about the reason for the change in Ziba's attitude. He is happy just as long as his wish remains to be her command. As long as the sheep follows the shepherd; as long as she does not make any demands and ask for anything. And as long as everything is hunky-dory for Chingiz.

Each time Ramin shows up at Ziba's, she feels glad and delighted while at the same time, she becomes worried and nervous.

Glad to meet a friend who is willing to help her with her difficult ordeal. Worried that Chingiz might find out about her secret, something that would be catastrophic.

She does not want to miss her only chance and opportunity in life to secure her future. She has high expectations for the future.

But it did not take long before the wicked servant of evil blew the whistle and with eternal devotion to his master, the devil, he informed him of an intruder's sighting in the master turf.

Malicious, callous, and blatant meddling into others' lives is something that some people love to do. These despicable creatures do not abide by any moral proscriptions such as, love thy neighbour. They are parasites who revel in others' misery and suffering.

People with dark souls. There is tainted blood that runs through their veins and shoots up to their brains. They have a heart of stone that is void of goodness and remains

impenetrable by any acts of decency.

One evening Chingiz comes home. He is red in the face from anger. He has got his hands clenched in a fist ready to pummel his victim with utter strength.

He shakes his fist at Ziba and screams

- What the hell is going on here? I will kill the person who cheats on me.

Ziba, fully anticipating such a day, looks around and responds

- I know what your informants must have told you. It probably involves the person who had a wrong address and mistakenly knocked on our door today, the one you are referring to. Did those who so enthusiastically reported this to you not see that he did not come in the house? Did you not receive a full report that he left just as quickly? Do you really think I am capable of such things? Why did I get married to you then?

Ziba responds calmly, sitting on a chair, while Chingiz stands above her like an executioner. She must stay calm and be consistent when she speaks. She must contain herself to lower the flames of resentment in Chingiz.

Chingiz is so full of anger that he does not notice Anahita standing at his side and shouting "Dad, Hi!" She pulls on her father's pants to get his attention, but to no avail. The only thing Chingiz is focused on is Ziba's reaction. He believes he is good at reading body language and he therefore can tell whether someone is lying or telling the truth.

Ziba tries with her little speech to calm Chingiz. She continues

- I can never imagine myself to be in love with someone else. The day I gave my word, "till death do us part," I made a commitment for life. My life is yours. My flesh and blood are my Anahita. I am not going to let you down.

Chingiz is greatly and visibly surprised at the unexpected speech Ziba just gave him. He is touched. The brain has cooled down and he feels calmer.

Chingiz is satisfied with his wife's speech. A wife who worships her husband and is obedient to him.

But when the seeds of mistrust are planted in one's heart, it keeps growing and it nestles in the whole body.

Kobra had in the past aroused Chingiz's suspicions about Ziba's infidelity on the ground of age difference between them. She had filled Chingiz's head with thoughts of malice, mistrust and helplessness.

Now dark spirits take control over Chingiz's wilted body, raising his blood pressure and pulse so he reiterates

- I know you have a lover. I will take care of him in due time.

Chingiz rushes out and pounds on a neighbor's door.

The neighbors who live two floors up from them are a middle-aged couple with two children, a daughter and a son. The man is a bank employee and his wife is a social-worker.

It was at their place Anahita once ended up and caused the huge uproar for the villain Chingiz and poor Ziba.

The neighbor opens the door all disturbed and worried about what might have happened. Who can it be that is taking the door off its hinge?

- I am tired of life. My wife has a lover, says Chingiz heatedly.

- Excuse me!

The neighbor is completely at a loss. He did not quite understand what Chingiz said, or he thought that perhaps he misheard what he just said. It is not normal for one to accuse his wife of adultery. In order not to seem rude the neighbour continues hesitantly

- How will I be able to help you?

- I cannot live like this. She tricked me. She wants me dead, despite everything I have done for her. Chingiz wants to turn

everything to his own advantage.

Ziba does not even come out and continues to read her newspaper. She knows that no one can blame her. They can obviously see how young his wife is. No one will take his side. They feel disgusted at the way an overbearing, old, man treats his young wife.

The neighbor does not know how to calm Chingiz down except to tell him

- No, Mr. Chingiz, you are mistaken. Your wife is a nice young girl. It will all work out. You are upset and that is why you are saying these things. You must be thrilled to have such a young wife.

Chingiz knows that he is not going to gain anything by rambling on. Not much can be done, the battle is lost. He turns around. As he goes down the stairs, he mumbles

- You don't understand. She wants to kill me. She will be my death.

He comes back to the house like a loser. He realizes how old and worn out he is getting and how he is losing his footing as well.

Now he realizes that people will not take his side if they become aware of Ziba's age and how young she is.

Ziba is calm, cool, and collected. She does not want to cause uproar. It is true that Chingiz cannot win people's sympathy, but he can file for divorce. That is not something that Ziba is ready for, at least not right now.

Chingiz sits at the dining table, looks at Ziba and says

- It makes no sense to continue like this. I made a mistake.

This marriage will be my death if it continues. I am . . .

- What is wrong with you Chingiz? Who said that I have got someone else? Calm down. Now when I am quiet and accepting of this life, why should I destroy it? Those who mislead you, do so out of jealousy and envy. Do not be gullible. Pull yourself together.

She cuts Chingiz off like that because she wants to stay married at least for the time being. She has no one to turn to. She has nowhere else to go. It is best to stay put and bear with Chingiz until the day she can afford to make her own decisions about her life and that of Anahita's.

Winter of 1966 has come to an end. It's a little chilly March-day.

Soon will be the New Year. There is an atmosphere of love and joy everywhere. Streets and alleys are decorated with candles and lights. The snow has melted away and the trees start to dress themselves with new leaves and buds. People are more active than usual. They resemble ants that crawl everywhere and rush in and out of different stores to do their new-year shopping. Children belong to the happiest category at such festive time of the year.

But for Ziba and her Anahita there does not seem to be a New Year celebration. Anahita must learn the bitter truth that she cannot expect any New Year's gift from Chingiz. Ziba has no hope for any change in Chingiz's attitude, although one never knows. Ziba keeps busy with her sewing job surreptitiously and Chingiz is the same as he has always been, mostly in a bad mood.

With time the bond between Ramin and Ziba strengthens more and more. Ramin delivers the sewing material and orders to Ziba personally. She is the only one for whom Ramin does such a favour.

So far, Chingiz has no clue of Ramin's existence. But he has his suspicions. His head is filled with toxic comments made by Kobra, who would like to see this marriage break up in anyway possible.

What is interesting is that Saaid is not able to be a part of this conspiracy. He is like his deceased step brother, Sam. Saaid focuses his time and energy on his own life.

Sara is more like her mother. She does, in most cases, take her mother's side particularly, in situations where Chingiz is the opposing party.

After a few months Ziba has become quite skilled in her new job and has made a good impression on her employer. She is also satisfied with the income. For the time being, when she

has shown how good she is and the employer has realized what clever and good seamstress Ziba is and what potential she has, she gets more advanced sewing work which would earn her more money. Of course, Ramin must have had a hand in this, but Ziba is not a bad seamstress either. Anahita will soon turn one. She has learned to talk a little; as well, she can almost walk without falling. She seems to be a tall and lovely girl. She is now quite tall for her age. Ziba wants to throw a small birthday party for Anahita. She knows that Chingiz will not go along with that. During Christmas and the New Year nothing happened. As if they were normal weekdays. But this is their daughter's birthday. They have one child together and for her it is her first child. The idea of birthday and children prompt Ziba to think about something. She wonders why she had not become pregnant after Anahita. First, she worries, but then given Chingiz's age and the natural aging process and its impact on body's functions, she realizes that perhaps it is Chingiz who no longer is able to have kids. Upon reflection, she is glad that she has not had more children. One is enough, she thinks to herself. What would I have done with another kid in this atrocious life? To bring another one into the world so he/she could be subjected to Chingiz's cruelty? Moreover, more kids would have meant getting more tied down to this life. No, she thinks, had I been as mature then as I am now, I would have not made any children at all. But now what is done is done; I love the one that I have, but I do not wish for more. The opposite idea is planted in Chingiz's head by his friend at work to whom he had complained so many times about Ziba. The fact that his friend never met Ziba and had heard awful things about her from Chingiz, led him naturally to believe that Ziba was a terrible woman. He gave some advice to Chingiz to help him. He suggested to Chingiz to make more

children with her so that no man would ever be drawn to her anymore.

Chingiz lied to his friend about Ziba. He lied to everybody about her. He wanted to paint Ziba as a vicious person, unfaithful spouse, a blood-sucking vampire. Those who did not know Ziba or had never met Ziba believed Chingiz. And as we humans tend to do, we give advice and tips to others on what they should do, how they should live and . . .

How many people have destroyed the life of their friends and acquaintances through their so-called "friendly advice" and guidance. If one friend comes and complains about his/her partner, the other friend should only listen and refrain from giving advice. One should not get emotional and become hostile towards their friend's partner. One must bear in mind that there are always two sides to every story and therefore, one needs to know the other party's version of the story as well.

If we could only encourage each other to compromise and be a bit more understanding in such situations. Instead of instigating break-ups and divorces, we could promote cooperation, tolerance and dialogue. Then friendships, marriages, acquaintances, and relationships would not fall apart.

Ziba wants to discuss her proposal for a birthday party for Anahita with Chingiz but does not know how to bring it up so as not to create a situation.

Ever since Ziba started working, she has tried to avoid getting into confrontations with Chingiz. She has not demanded for anything. She has not argued with Chingiz; and, she has not denied him anything. Ziba has complied with and pleased Chingiz in every respect.

Spring is here. It is early March. The air is full of spring fever. It is time for good weather, sun and heat. All plants will soon bud.

It is in this season that God gave Ziba a daughter. A daughter she adores. A daughter for whom she has big plans. She wants to give her everything. She wants to give her all her love unconditionally.

Chingiz does not even remember the date she was born, so how can one expect him to know that it is Anahita's birthday. He did not care about Christmas, New Year, wedding anniversary, Ziba's birthday and his own birthday. Why should he bother with Anahita's?

One who does not care for anything or anyone cannot appreciate the good fortune that he/she has.

Ziba has decided to have a small banquet. First, she thinks of inviting the neighbors. But that is not possible. Since they moved into the building Ziba has not socialized with the neighbors.

Moreover, because of Chingiz's caddish and insolent mannerisms, which were put on display when he went to them to complain about Ziba and ask for help, none of the neighbors wants to be around Chingiz. He has scared away the neighbors while he has banned Ziba from talking to any of the neighbors.

Therefore Ziba thinks to hold a small private party with only her, Anahita and Chingiz.

In the evening when Chingiz comes home Ziba asks whether it would be alright to have a little private party for Anahita.

Oddly enough, Chingiz does not object and says

- Sure, let us have a celebration for the little princess. But only the three of us.

Ziba is surprised that Chingiz even agreed to the proposal.

But now when he says O.K., one must act quickly before he changes his mind.

In the evening of April twelfth, Ziba prepares a small feast including a small cake. She grabs her little, simple, and cheap camera. She had received that as a Christmas present from

her father, before she met Chingiz. She takes a few pictures. She had a roll of film in the camera from a long time ago. The evening, though simple, was an unforgettable one for Ziba. It was the first time there were any celebrations of any kind.

A week goes by and things are running smoothly in Ziba's life. She has her private work and meets Ramin on those occasions he stops by with new orders and gets the finished garments.

Life is always in fluctuation for us humans, but for some of us it swings harder than for others. Regardless of how one has it, good or bad, happy or sad, rich or poor, dull or glamorous and . . . , things happen that can change one's entire life and turn it upside down.

So far everything was indeed calm and quiet. But Kobra does not want to see Chingiz's bigamy last in any way. She must see to it that the concubine is erased from Chingiz "life diary." She has an eye on the situation in a more vigilant manner than Chingiz.

Due to the fact that the stupid and self-destructive Chingiz trusts Kobra and tells her everything that happens at home, Kobra has an edge over Chingiz's life. She knows how Ziba operates and how she and Anahita have it. She knows Chingiz's weaknesses and those of Ziba's. Kobra knows her husband. She knows, for example, that Chingiz is not prudent in his sex life. Chingiz is a guy who does not use protection. He is one that for his own pleasure, he does not take any physical preventive measures during sex. He does not think about the consequences. He does not care that Ziba might get pregnant, and life would become more difficult for both him and her.

It has been a while since Ziba gave birth to Anahita. And with that piece of knowledge that Kobra has about Chingiz, she is curious as to why Ziba is not pregnant.

To set her plan in motion, Kobra takes up the issue at one of the regular visits Mr. Chingiz makes to her

- It was long ago Ziba got pregnant. I do not think she can have more children. She has certainly gone to a doctor and got herself sterilized without your knowledge.

Chingiz's blood starts to boil at Kobra's insinuations and he replies back

- She knows what I will do to her if she commits a mistake like that without talking to me about it.

Kobra says no more. She knows that the ground-work for a new conflict is laid. And she was right on.

With her innuendos, Chingiz's fossilized brain starts to go into overdrive sending pulses that cause adrenalin rush and turn him into a fire breathing dragon, green with envy and hatred.

As soon as he leaves Kobra he cannot think about anything else but to confront Ziba about why she has not become pregnant after Anahita. Is it true that she went to a doctor without the permission of her Lord, for God help her if that is the case.

On the way home he thinks hard and draws hasty conclusions about why she was seen to be going out so many times by those informants who keep him apprised of Ziba's every move. He convinces himself that Ziba must have been to a doctor in those few times she had gone out.

Ziba, unaware that soon the whole world is going to collapse around her, is busy sewing away. She had no idea that Chingiz was going to have lunch with Kobra that day.

The door opens and all unexpectedly, Chingiz appears in the doorway. He does not notice what Ziba is doing. He does not see the sewing machine and all the sewing material lying on the floor around her. The only thing he sees is an impostor, a chiseler that, in his eyes, has committed a despicable act for which she must be punished.

Ziba is shocked. She gets nervous and loses her breath. She does not know why Chingiz stares at her like that. He glares so furiously at her that is absolutely dreadful and makes her utterly restless. She fears the ramifications of this daunting gaze that is directed at her. It feels like someone has aimed his rifle directly at her heart.

Ziba thinks that now everything is revealed about her sewing business. Now that he has laid eyes on the sewing machine, all is lost, and there goes her dreams. What excuse is she going to come up with? How will she explain?

- I can explain, says Ziba with trembling voice and continues. The fact is that . . .

- Shut up. I know what it is. Do not start with your ridiculous excuses now. When did you do it? Chingiz Interrupts Ziba furiously and waits for a response.

Ziba is talking about one thing while Chingiz is talking about something else. The question is how and when one of them will catch on what is happening.

- Yes, a few months ago. But it would benefit us all if I . . .

- Oh indeed, it does. But who gave you permission. Was I consulted about it? Who do you take me for, anyway? Did you think that I was not going to find out about it at some point? This time it is over for you. Forget Anahita and this life . . .

- No Chingiz, I beg you to listen to what I have to say. It is not what you think.

- I know. There is nothing to think about. Kobra was right. She is smart. She cares about me.

She knew what a snake you are. You did not want to have more children and without my permission you got yourself fixed. I will show you . . .

- Wait, wait! What on earth are you talking about? Who said that I have done that?

Chingiz, where did you get this dumb idea from? I haven't

done what you claim I did. Get a grip on yourself now and listen to what I am saying! I have not had any surgeries.

Chingiz quiets down. He is silent. What is he going to say now? He sits down.

Ziba realizes that his rage was not caused by what he saw on the floor. No, he has not even noticed that a sewing machine is on the floor with a bunch of fabric and other material around it. She understands that Kobra had turned him against her.

Kobra's ploy failed miserably. But Ziba waits for Chingiz's reaction when he, who was blinded by rage, starts getting his senses back and starts functioning normally to take note of everything that is in the middle of the floor.

At that instance, Anahita who was sitting in the corner and playing, stood up and went toward her father. She paced around her father like a butterfly around candles to draw her father's attention.

Good thing Chingiz is in a calm state now when Anahita is near him.

He notices Anahita's presence beside him. He turns his eyes to her. Looking at the face of his little girl as if he had never really had the time or desire to see how his little angel looked like. He is moved and eager to hold his little girl in his arms and feel her existence.

Chingiz reaches for Anahita while he says

- Come, my little angel. Come to Dad!

Now, his paternal feelings are suddenly awakened. For a while he thought that he could not have more children, a thought which before Kobra's plot had not even occurred to him. Anahita was the last child he was to have with Ziba. Ironically, one fails to recognize the value of what one has until he/she is deprived of it. One should not take anything for granted. Chingiz who has a beautiful and young wife does

not appreciate that until all is lost.

Chingiz who so far has not bothered with his children, particularly Anahita, is now interested in having more children. Why? Well, for a brief moment he thought that he did not have that option anymore.

In addition, Chingiz has his own plans for Ziba. He had the right to have more children to boost family growth. In so doing, he would also succeed in leaving Ziba with a few scars in life after his death.

Now that everything has calmed down, Chingiz notices the strange apparatus and asks Ziba

- What is that thing?

Ok, it is time now for the real fight. What will she respond now so as not to make him angry? But before she has time to think, Chingiz screams and says

- I asked a simple question, what the hell is that?

The volcano is flaring up again. He puts down Anahita and stands up. Anahita starts to cry when she, the little innocent creature, hears her father speak. She is too young to understand that her moron father did not yell at her but at poor Ziba.

The situation is tight for Ziba. She must answer before he beats her up. Chingiz swore and raged and raised his fists. Ziba took refuge in the corner, where she always sits hunched over to protect herself from the hard punches or belt whips Chingiz affords her.

Chingiz steps forward and asks her again

- What is this? Will you respond or should I beat the answer out of you?

- It's a sewing machine I rented in order to sew a few clothes for Anahita. We cannot afford to buy clothes for her. I thought this would be cheaper, says Ziba hunched over with head buried between her arms.

Chingiz says

- Why didn't you tell me that before?

- Because I got it today. And since you've got home, I haven't got a chance to say anything.

She was correct about that. Since the moment Chingiz set foot in the house, he began to fuss and fight about having more children. He has already made a gaffe and, therefore, he does not want to make another one. He goes back to his chair and sits down. He is really ashamed of his first faux pas.

Moreover, what Ziba said makes a lot of sense. If she can sew clothes for Anahita and it would be cheaper to do so, so let her do it. While she is busy during the day with this chore, he would be off the hook for paying for clothes and stuff hence, killing two birds with one stone.

Chingiz is so wrapped up in his thoughts on pregnancy and children that he does not feel like conducting a full interrogation about the sewing machine. His suspicion about Ziba's possible surgery has consumed him so much that he cannot think about anything other than that. Had he not been so preoccupied with those issues, he would have dragged the whole story out of Ziba about that sewing machine with force.

Chingiz is a suspicious person. He does not even trust himself. To be sure, he tells Ziba

- I demand an explanation from you but not now. We will go to a doctor tomorrow to get you examined. I have to be sure. Ziba who has nothing to worry about does not make any objections. She is just surprised that Chingiz did not beat her, and for once she skipped being assaulted.

The next day Chingiz, Ziba and Anahita go to the doctor. It is nice weather. The sun shines like a glowing ball in the sky. No signs of clouds are visible in the blue sky. Such a great day should have been devoted to going on a picnic and having fun instead of troubling oneself and one's family over nonsense.

Ziba is calm. She knows that she is not sterile. Anahita is happy. She is a child who enjoys her childhood, if only Chingiz permits that. By contrast, Chingiz is restless. He is suspicious and thinks that soon the truth about Ziba's sinful deed will be exposed. He is not afraid of scandal. To drag his young and innocent wife to the doctor just out of suspicion. He did not take her to the doctor during pregnancy. Not even at the time of delivery was a doctor present, rather he hired a midwife. God knows what would have happened to poor Ziba if the pregnancy or delivery had run into any complications. At the doctor's, Chingiz claims that he wants to find out why his wife has not become pregnant after the first childbirth. The doctor is a man in his forties with gray hair, thick glasses with thick black bow. First he wonders who is who? He must fill out his report accurately so he asks

- What is your relationship to each other?

Chingiz cannot dodge the question here. He must say who he is.

- I am, I am her husband, says Chingiz briskly.

The physician could not believe his ears. He pauses for a second and asks Ziba

- At which hospital did you give birth? And who was your doctor? I need to see your medical file before I can continue. Now Chingiz is losing it with all these questions. Which doctor? Which hospital? What will he say now? That he is a tightwad that did not take his dear wife to a doctor. That he, the miser, did not want to pay for anything, not even in the case of his wife and his child. How can one justify something

like that? Some people become cynically and fretfully stingy over the years but Chingiz was like that from the beginning. He pulls himself together and before Ziba opens her mouth, he says

- Forget it! We are sorry. I never knew this would be an interrogation.

Let's go Ziba!

The statement takes the doctor by complete surprise. It was the first time he had come across an odd couple. A couple who were not in any shape or form compatible with each other.

He is not quite sure how to respond, but he turns around to Chingiz and says

- It is quite okay if you do not want me to contact your previous doctor. It would have made my job easier, but forget it.

He says that to get Chingiz to go for a medical examination of Ziba. He is now curious about what made Chingiz so nervous. Why did Chingiz not want him to contact their doctor? What is really going on with this couple anyway?

How . . .

A thousand questions started to go through his head now. To get the answers then, it was best to meet their, or more precisely, Chingiz's conditions, for Ziba has been sitting quietly just like a child who follows the orders of her father to the letter.

Chingiz sits down again and waits for the next question from the doctor.

The doctor does not know how to ask the next question, so as not to cause a new outburst in Chingiz. He carefully formulates his question and asks

- Let us begin to take a blood and a urine test before we move on. Are you okay with that?

He must be careful in leading Chingiz to where he wants him.

So, he asks for Chingiz's approval first before he goes ahead with anything. By so doing, he ensures that Chingiz would go along with the procedure.

- Let's do it! Chingiz says without hesitation.

Back then, the patient would go for the test and then be sent home with an appointment for a next visit.

On the way back, they split. Chingiz goes to work and Ziba goes home with Anahita.

Half a day was taken up by this appointment. Ziba could have instead got a lot of her sewing done.

Ziba heads home frustrated and angry at Chingiz who treats her like his slave. She must bear with it for the time being.

Right now, she has no choice. But it is nonetheless a tall order for her to have to put up with him. She cannot even stand another day and needs to free herself from this life that does not have a single moment of joy and serenity.

When she gets home she sees Ramin standing at the entrance.

She is filled with joy as soon as she sees Ramin. He is her only friend. Sometimes, it seems that he is more than that.

The way the two of them look at each other is a sign of a blooming love.

Ramin is not so innocent either. The fact that he shows up quite often at her place. That he personally takes up the role of a delivery boy to drop off and pick up materials to and from Ziba's house, although the company does have employees to perform this function. That from the beginning he cared so much about Ziba and asked her so many irrelevant questions. That . . . and that makes him guilty of the romance developed between them.

They are like two different poles of a magnet drawn to each other. Ziba who never tasted the joys of love and Ramin who is intrigued by the beauty he found in Ziba from the first day he met her.

- Hi, am I so glad to see you here, Ziba expresses herself with

a smile.

- Same here. How is work? How is everything? I have brought sewing machine oil for the sewing machine. I don't think you got that from us. It is needed to oil the machine now and again.

Sewing machine oil! What an excuse to drive all this way from the other side of town to meet Ziba. She knew that this was just an excuse to come over and see her, and that made her immensely happy.

- Thanks, that was nice of you. Would you like to come in? Ziba asks though deep down inside she is worried about Chingiz showing up or anyone gossiping about her to him.

- No thanks, I gotta go. I'm already late. But we'll meet soon. Ramin leaves at once. He seemed almost breathless. From the looks of it, he seems to be quite interested in Ziba. Same goes for Ziba. She is not so disinterested in him either.

So far everything is fine. Ziba has not been cheating on Chingiz and Chingiz has not yet discovered Ramin's existence.

Anahita is one-year old now. She is a playful and happy little girl. To Ziba's surprise and delight, she demonstrates high level of intelligence that is well ahead of her age. She is already good at talking, of course not like adults, but much better than her peers. She shows great interest in painting. Her favourite play seems to be drawing on papers with color-pencils and her drawings consist mostly of the things she sees around her, a representation which is quite laudable for such a small child.

Ziba has already noticed how gifted Anahita is. She, like all other mothers, has high hopes for her little girl. To foster Anahita's enormous passion for drawing, Ziba ensures that there are plenty of papers and color pencils around.

Once Anahita drew a picture of her doll so artistically and beautifully that Ziba was amazed. So far, Ziba has saved

everything Anahita has ever drawn. She knows that one day her little girl is going to make a name for herself in the world of art.

All Ziba does and everything she endures are for the sake of her Anahita. She is the only gleam of light she has in her life. She knows wherever she may be and however she may live, Anahita is her daughter and no one can ever take her away from her.

In contrast, there is Chingiz who has never cared about his children or his wives. He is of a peculiar nature. You never know what mood he is in. He is like a boiling volcano that at any point in time can erupt.

April draws to a close. According to the weather forecasts on radio, it is supposedly going to be a good summer this year. But for Ziba, that does not have any meaning yet. What is Chingiz going to do? Is he going to take his family on an outing, or is he going to take his family on a trip? No, Ziba better forget about such things. She would be lucky if she gets just a little peace and quiet in her everyday life. She has big plans for her life and that of Anahita's. Those she does not want to spoil.

She promises herself not to bring up any discussions about summer plans, travel and entertainment with Chingiz so as to avoid conflicts.

She shut up long ago about her desire for a larger apartment. One day, one day she will open up. One day, she will no longer be dependent on Chingiz. Then she can run her own life. She lives for that day.

When Ziba thinks of the age difference between Chingiz and her, she blames herself for the decision she made in allowing herself to become his wife.

However, when she thinks of Ramin, she is filled with a soothing sense of relief and calmness. She feels warm all over. A smile comes to her lips that is a sure sign of love. Ramin is the man of her dreams, whom she unfortunately met a little late. She is bounded by another marriage. She has made a commitment to someone else as a way to avenge her beloved Saman. She has given her promise of "till death do us part" to someone else. How will she be able to break her promise? It is not possible. She does not want to do it, not for Chingiz's sake, no, but for the sake of a little innocent girl who has been brought into this world. She feels safe only in the bosom of her mother. The father, no one can count on.

It is in such circumstances that it becomes difficult for a woman to leave her life and start a new one. The motherly love makes a woman sacrifice her life for her child without any hesitations.

Each time Ziba thinks about putting an end to this unbearable life and leaving it behind, it is the thoughts of Anahita that hold her back. She is well aware of her financial situation. She knows that as long as she does not have her own income, she is dependent on Chingiz (like a drug addict). What will she do if she leaves Chingiz? To go to her parents is absolutely out of the question. If they wanted her, they would have never given her away to an old man who fooled them with a bunch of empty promises he made to them. Her relatives are also out of the question. Who is left then? No one, except a stranger, Ramin.

Is Ramin interested in marrying Ziba? Would Chingiz go for a divorce? No, of course not. He would sooner kill her, rather than let someone else have her. What would happen with Anahita? Chingiz will get his revenge on her by taking Anahita. The alternative would be revenge. Or it may turn out that Ramin is not interested in Anahita . . . No, oh God, even the thought of that makes her quiver.

No matter how one looks at it, it is a sad state of affairs and the best thing to do for the time being is to hold on, work hard, and save money as much as possible. And avoid fighting with Chingiz until the day that plans can be put into action.

One Friday night when Ziba sat and read old newspapers, Chingiz came home empty-handed and tired. He is in neither good nor bad mood. Ziba was hoping very much that Chingiz would at least buy a box of chocolate just for that day. But what was about that day that made it so important to Ziba?

Chingiz takes off his shoes and gets changed into more comfortable clothes. He goes to the kitchen, opens the refrigerator, grabs the carton of milk and pours himself a glass of milk. As soon as he pours the milk he notices that it has gone bad. It is gone sour so much that it resembles yogurt.

- Damn, what is wrong with this god-damn milk? Do you ever keep an eye on what's in this fucking fridge? What the hell do you do during the day? Screams Chingiz and continues

- Move it now! Go get me milk. I know that the store is still open.

Ziba gets up and without a word she grabs her coat to go buy milk for her master. It is late. It is half past eleven at night. It takes fifteen minutes to get to the store from home. So for her, if she walks fast, it would take half an hour to go there and come back.

When Ziba leaves, Anahita wakes up crying as a result of the pandemonium that her inept father created.

At first, Chingiz does not bother himself with her and keeps busy reading the newspaper. But after a few minutes he loses his patience and shouts at Anahita

- Damn, shut up! What is it with you now?

It does not help shouting at a child. She now starts to cry more vociferously. Chingiz goes over to her crib and picks her up while he swears at Ziba's poor house-keeping and child rearing.

The way he is holding Anahita in his arms is the most idiotic way one can imagine. It is obvious that Chingiz does not have a clue as to how one should hold a baby. He has got his hands around Anahita's waist and is holding her horizontally like a book. He is holding Anahita in his grips in much the same way as if he was holding a rolled newspaper. Anahita is getting sore in the back and in her stomach. She cries more

from the pain but the father does not get it.

Ziba comes home and sees how Chingiz is mishandling the child by means of holding her in such awkward fashion. She does not even take her coat off as she rushes in, gets the baby away from Chingiz, puts the milk on the table, and says

- Here you are, Your Majesty!

After all, since she had promised herself not to get into a fight with Chingiz anymore and to keep quiet at all costs, she says nothing more. She does not want to sabotage her own plan. She has a goal to reach.

Ziba wonders what Chingiz was up to now? What in the world was going on? Milk! Chingiz drinking milk? Since when has he become addicted to milk that he must have it so badly and so urgently? It must be one of his crazy ways to annoy his wife.

Ziba was so disturbed by Chingiz's behavior that she forgot about her expectation to get any gifts from Chingiz. It is Ziba's birthday today. For this she had hoped in vain that Chingiz would at least congratulate her, if buying something happened to be difficult or expensive for him. What else can one expect?

When everything calms down and Anahita fall asleep, thanks to his mother, Ziba asks Chingiz

- Do you know what day it is?

Chingiz is preparing himself to go to bed. He does not worry about what Ziba said. He pretends not to have heard her. Is he starting to become deaf as well? Stupid he is. Insensitive and cold he is. Selfish and vulgar, he is. Nasty and now adding one more negative characteristic to the long list is DEAF.

Ziba asks again, but this time she raises her voice a little

- Chingiz, do you know what today was?

Chingiz is now half-way in bed. He answers while he is stretching out in bed

- No! Why? We had to go to the doctor today? Or?

- Forget it! It was nothing.

She does not even want to mention it to him now. He does not deserve to know.

She is just as disappointed as she has always been since she met Chingiz.

Soon it's time for the next doctor's appointment. It is something that Chingiz does not forget. For when he is at work, this is the only thing he thinks of. He is afraid that there might be something wrong with him. He is not using a condom and he does not believe that Ziba takes any pills. He is sure of himself but he does not trust Ziba.

Chingiz is always of the belief that Ziba is unfaithful and that he will one day catch her.

Why is Chingiz like this? Well, since he himself throughout his life could not be faithful not only in sex life but also in all other respects. Since Chingiz's social circle is mostly comprised of prostitutes, adulterous women, liars, and immoral people, he paints everyone with the same brush.

The date of the medical visit has come. They go to the same doctor with whom Chingiz did not get along because of the questions he asked.

The doctor has got the test results in his hand and says

- I am glad to see you again. The samples show no signs of anything wrong. But Mr. Chingiz you must be a little more cautious with your diet. We found a little, just a little, high cholesterol otherwise everything is as it should be.

That made Chingiz pleased to know that everything is fine with him and that he is healthy as a horse.

Ziba is relieved that Chingiz's allegations turned out to be not true and that he had the test result right there in front of him.

- Now we need to take cell samples from your wife and sperm samples from you for further investigation, continues the doctor.

Chingiz asks perplexedly

- What is cell sampling?

- It is so that we take a very tiny amount of tissue from her uterus to test for . . .

- Who in the heck will do that? Asks Chingiz furiously. The doctor does not understand the question at first and wonders why Chingiz is so upset. He did not say anything strange. He wonders what Chingiz really means by his question.

- Sorry?

- I want a female doctor to do that. You bastards want to take advantage of every opportunity to seduce people's wives. As I said . . .

- Mr. Chingiz, wait, wait! You are getting ahead of yourself. To begin with, who said that I was going to perform the test? This must be done by an oncologist, which is not what I am. Besides, do you think that everyone is out there after your wife? I am happily married and have four children. What do you take me for? If you want you are more than welcome to go to another clinic.

Chingiz keeps quiet.

He has once again embarrassed Ziba in front of others. That he wants to make a fool of himself is his business but that his wife has to feel ashamed in front of others and has to stand with her head down so as to avoid looking others in the eye and witnessing her husband's boorish behaviour is another matter.

Chingiz continues

- Who is this onk . . . whatever it was called?

- It is called oncologist. We have female oncologists who can do this. So you dear Mr. Chingiz can take it easy. Let's get it over with.

After samples were taken and they were heading home, Ziba asks

- What do you say if we grab a bite to eat before we go

home?

Ziba hopes that Chingiz still remembers those good memories during their engagement period and before they got married. She remembers the good old days. It was not anything glamorous, but compared with her life now that brief period seems to have been pure paradise. She sometimes wonders why he changed so much after the marriage. Was it because he got what he wanted that is, to sleep with Ziba?

Or that perhaps he became regretful immediately after they got married and grew a conscience all of a sudden?

No, conscience is not something he has. So it cannot be that. But what then? Is he afraid of being made responsible for anything? Maybe that's what frightens the life out of him. It must be that he is trying to escape RESPONSIBILITY.

Ziba wonders how he would feel if she were to assure him that there is no need for him to feel any responsibility and obligation toward either her or Anahita.

Ziba imagines herself looking into Chingiz's eyes and telling him

- Chingiz I work as a dressmaker now and earn my own money. You do not need to pay for household and stuff. I take care of us. But there is one condition. That you treat us more fairly. That you do not beat me. That you do not argue with me anymore. That you do not rape me, RAPE, that is right!

The word "rape" had her come back to reality from her wonderful daydream. How in the world should she get that through his thick head? How . . .

- What did you say? Says Chingiz

She was so deep in her thoughts that she completely forgot what she had asked him about.

- Yes, I asked if we could eat out.

- No, I have to go to work. You go home and cook lunch!

Who do you think I am, an oil sheik?

Chingiz replies back and goes to work.

Ziba could not expect more than that from him. She and Anahita get going toward home. But suddenly it strikes her. - I have my own money. No, I won't touch them. But the measly allowance that Chingiz gives me, I can very well take some of that and eat out. How is he going to find out? She and Anahita go to a hot-dog vendor and buy themselves sausage. It was not a dream lunch but she ate out. It was what she wanted.

On the way home she went back to her thoughts about relieving Chingiz from his marital duties. She thought of how she should say that to Chingiz. One of her major problems is the violent love-making she must endure. Every time she is subjected to having sex with Chingiz, it appears as if an entire gang has had intercourse with her. The pain she feels during and after those intolerable sexual interactions have scared her for life.

The thing she does not know is how to tame Chingiz. She thinks she can convince and persuade him regarding the finances. She is confident that Chingiz would be pleased to know that he does not have to support her and Anahita and he would welcome such opportunity with open arms. But how would the discussion surrounding the sex ritual go over with him? How is she going to make him understand the amount of pain that she goes through in order to please him sexually? She is willing to sleep with him since she knows that there is no way out of that, but how can she stop him from being so rough with her and get him to help ease the pain by means of foreplay and so forth. Because it hurts something awful every time he forces himself upon her and injures her delicate body. Her problem is how to put it to him? How to get it through his thick head?

Ziba has convinced herself that if she tells him about her

work, things will be different. This idea sounded perfect to her but then it hit her: what will happen to Anahita's future? If she wants to become the bread-winner in the family, she must have good financial stability to do so. At the moment she does not earn much. She is suddenly overwhelmed by the thought of Anahita's schooling and the costs associated with her education.

Nope, this was not a good idea after all. She must wait out and hang on until she has saved up some real money otherwise her whole plan will go down the drain.

That day Ziba decides to stick with the first phase of her plan and not say a word to Chingiz about her income.

A few days later Ramin visits Ziba. It was time to pick up the completed orders and drop off the new ones. He is as always glad to meet Ziba at every opportunity he gets.

- Hi Ziba, how are you? Asks Ramin, all glad to see her again.

- Fine, thank you, all is well now. How about yourself?

This time, Ramin gives himself permission to go into the house. Although he is afraid to cause trouble for Ziba. As soon as he enters the house, he is amazed over the living space. Three people, how can they live like this? Who can let himself and his family live in such sub-standard living condition and in such a small apartment? It is more like a prison than an apartment.

This puzzles Ramin so much that he asks

- How can you live in such a rat-hole?

- Well, I do not know. We just do it, responds Ziba uncomfortably.

She feels humiliated thanks to dear Chingiz.

- Is he, I mean your husband Chingiz, he is so mean that he lets you stay in a one-room flat! I now understand what you meant when you told me what type of a man he is.

Ramin feels sorry for people who put their fellow human-

beings through so much misery and pain. He does not understand how a man, a so-called man in this case, can allow his family to be subjected to hardship and cruelty. He cannot hold back his feelings about Chingiz

- No, damn it! How can this man treat you like this? He abuses you; he lets you live like this; he controls you. What other things does he do? I am sure that he rapes you too. Bull's-eye. He hits the nail on the head. It was like pulling out one of the blades Chingiz had pressed down into Ziba's heart. She burst into tears as soon as she hears Ramin say that.

- My dear friend! What can I say? This man has degraded me. I brought this misery on myself and I cannot back out of it. Who do I have? No one. What can I do? Nothing. I am lost and . . .

- No, dear child, you are not. You have me. I will help you. I understand you more than anyone else, says Ramin while he gives her a hug.

Ziba cried in Ramin's bosom so much that his shirt became wet from her tears. While in each other's embrace, their eyes met. They looked each other in the eye for a few seconds. Like a flower that blossoms, Ziba smiled at Ramin. He bent his head and kissed her. She reciprocated by allowing him to kiss her.

She has found a loyal friend in her life. Until today, no one had offered her any assistance, any sympathy or affection. The only one who showed concern about her situation was Ramin and today, he pledged to her that he will support her and help her out of this dilemma.

That day, Ramin leaves the stuff at Ziba's and takes the completed orders with him.

They have a long conversation that day and decide to meet the following day at eleven. In order for the neighbors not to see her get into Ramin's car, he decides to park over in the

next block and pick up Ziba from there.

Ziba is content and happy. She looks forward to seeing her Ramin. Ziba only hopes that Chingiz's cronies do not blab to him about Ramin's long visit today.

Chingiz comes home at night. He is happy. He has a smile on his face. And moreover, he comes bearing fruits and sweets.

He walks in and says

- Hello my lady. What's up?

Ziba does not know what has brought this about but she is just relieved to see Chingiz in such a good mood.

- Hi! Has something happened that we should know? Ziba answers in the hopes that he does not blow up again.

Ziba does not recognize Chingiz. It is very rare to see him smile or happy.

Anahita goes to him shouting "Daddy, Daddy!"

- Hi, little angel. Come on! Dad has got something for you princess.

Ziba still stands in the middle of the room and wonders what has happened. Is she hallucinating or what?

- Well, to what do we owe the pleasure of seeing Mr. Chingiz happy and in a good mood? Ziba repeats her question. She is dying of curiosity. She is confused and surprised by what she sees.

- Sure. I have won some money in the lottery, responds Chingiz.

- Well, how wonderful! Is it true? How much?

- Ten thousands.

Ziba is just glad to see Chingiz so happy. The money was not of any significance to Ziba. Just to see Chingiz laughing and letting the family have some peace and quiet is worth gold for Ziba.

That evening was the first of a number of other good and fun evenings. Chingiz is talkative and humorous. He plays with Anahita. He kisses Ziba out of love and not because he wants

to sleep with her. He even promises to get her anything she wants. He promises to buy her a television set.

None of these influences Ziba's decision to remain quiet about her work, the money she has saved, or her wishes for a bigger apartment. She knows that as soon as she makes any requests, things will be taken the wrong way and knowing Chingiz's hot temper, he will become furious. Besides, ten thousand is not a lot of money. It is not enough to build a better life.

With the plans Chingiz has already got for the money, it won't be long before the whole thing is blown away.

Ziba, however, is happy that she will meet her Ramin tomorrow.

That night, she hardly slept all night. Her thoughts kept circling around one topic, Ramin.

The next day, content with life, Chingiz goes to work. Ziba immediately starts to get ready to go out with Anahita. She has a date today.

Exactly at eleven o'clock Ramin is at the set location. A few minutes later, he sees his sweetheart come toward him. They drive away from that area.

In the car, Ziba sits in front with Anahita sitting on the back seat. He asks

- Are you okay? Is Chingiz gone to work?

- Everything is fine, no problems. How does it feel Ramin?

- What?

- Well, I just wonder. For me, this feels just as exciting as it is scary.

- What do you mean? Why scary? I am thrilled to see you.

- You know Ramin, I never thought I would meet someone other than the man I love . . .

- Do you mean that you love Chingiz?!

- No, for god's sake! No, he is a monster. I mean the man who was to become my husband. But now that my destiny is nothing like I had dreamt it to be and I ended up with a man whose very existence in my life is my greatest sorrow, I have to find comfort in someone else: you.

- I am glad Ziba that it was I who got to meet you. I have been thinking about the whole thing since we met yesterday. You can get a divorce and take Anahita with you and come live with me. I can . . .

- Ramin, dear Ramin, take it easy. Chingiz's company has not given me anything other than bad manners. Ramin, I do not think it is as easy as you say. But in order not to spoil the day, let us enjoy this precious time we have together.

Ramin says no more. He does not want to push her or rush anything.

They go to a restaurant and talk about anything and everything. They eat, laugh, comfort each other about their

misfortunes and fall for each other more than the day before. Ziba tells him about her first love Saaid. She explains how she ruined her own life when she found out about Saaid's unfaithfulness. She trusts Ramin with all her secrets. She even tells him how Chingiz sexually abuses her. Hearing all of this makes Ramin extremely upset so much so that he feels a deep sense of rage growing in his heart. He also finds himself falling for Ziba more than ever before. Ziba tries to make Ramin see the mess she is in. She must somehow find a way to get herself out of this mess alive. She cannot, for Anahita's sake, just pack and leave. That day is the first day for Ziba to truly fall in love, and to fall in love with Ramin. She is now in a dangerous situation that could cost her her life. So far everything is good. Chingiz has not suspected anything yet. But Ziba has not been unfaithful either since her relationship with Ramin is only on an emotional level, same as it was with Saaid. Also, she never felt anything for Chingiz to begin with. Now that she does feel something for Chingiz, it is nothing but hatred and anger. After Saaid cheated on her, she locked up her feelings in her heart's safe and suppressed all her feelings toward men. The only thing she got to take out of the safe was the motherly love, thanks to Anahita.

Days go by. Ziba and Ramin have not had the chance to meet each other any more.

Chingiz reminds Ziba of the medical visit they have the next day. That is perfect since Ramin is supposed to show up the day after that so Ziba is not going to miss the chance to see him.

Today the results of the tests are going to reveal what really goes on and why Ziba has not so far become pregnant.

Ziba just hopes that everything goes well. She hopes that Chingiz does not lose his good humour after this visit. She

thinks of the night when Chingiz won the lottery. She has not seen any TV that was promised by Chingiz but she could not care less about a TV. The important thing is Anahita in the first place and then Ramin.

Although she and Ramin have not met that often and while they have not had the opportunity to get to know each other better, for Ziba it feels as if they have known each other all their lives.

At the doctor's office, Ziba sits calmly, confident and full of anticipation, she awaits the doctor's response that there is nothing wrong with her.

When the doctor enters the room, he gets right to the point - Unfortunately, we have to do a more thorough investigation. Something has come up that we must further examine in order to be sure. If you . . .

- Hold on doctor. What kind of complications? Tell me what it is. Spit it out!

Chingiz interrupts the doctor swiftly and demands an answer. He suspects that his misgivings about Ziba were correct all along. Therefore, he has to find out exactly what the problem is and he is adamant to get a straight answer from the doctor. The doctor sees no other way than to say it like it is. He knows that sooner or later he must inform them of the problem. But he does not want to worry a patient before he is absolutely sure about the results. To avoid further questions from Chingiz, he says

- I can only say that your wife's test results were perfectly normal. But it is you we want to run some more tests on. If you come with me . . .

- Get away from me! What the hell do you mean? That there is something wrong with me? Not in a million years. Damn idiot! You son of a bitch, you want to send me to my grave and seduce my wife! I know. I saw it in your eyes the last time as you were fussing about onc . . . whatever the hell it

was called.

There was quite a chaos at the clinic. His hysterical outburst got everyone at the clinic to rush into the doctor's office to see what was going on. Nurses, doctors, and other staff tried to calm him down so that the other patients would not be disturbed.

He eventually pulled himself together and sat down. He was breathing heavily and feeling dizzy.

Chingiz can never accept that there could be something wrong with him. He is terrified of surgery and medical examinations. He believes that falling into the hands of doctors is the same as submitting to death.

In Chingiz's view, doctors are butchers who love to cut into people with knives and sew them up again.

Once he calmed down, he was asked to go to the lab. They needed to run a second sperm test on him.

This time it was not as easy as last time. The last time, he had no problem to ejaculate quickly and get the test over with.

Today, however, he was so stressed and upset that it took an hour before he was done.

On the way back from there Chingiz swore incessantly. Ziba did not dare do anything except to follow him, soundless and obedient as a dog whose master dragged her on a leash.

Chingiz is beside himself. He is furious because he ended up being the one with the problem. He is just as scared as he is infuriated. What if there is something seriously wrong with him?

He thinks that maybe this is a bluff and the doctor is just trying to pay him back for his offensive behaviour. Maybe he just wants to get back at Chingiz for the way he insulted him. Perhaps Ziba has spoken to him beforehand and put him up to this. Or is it possible that his test was mixed up with someone else's?

Ziba, on the other hand, is deep in her own thoughts as she

wonders what kind of trouble is going to befall her. She had thought that she was going to be spared from fighting for a while. She knows that something is certainly going to happen when Chingiz comes home in the evening. This time, she has a bad feeling. She gets anxious even thinking about it. She panics thinking about things like that.

As they part, Chingiz does not even say goodbye to her. She rushes home to get started on her sewing. She is supposed to meet Ramin tomorrow. That is not good. It is getting too stressful, she thinks. Think if Chingiz finds out. He will kill her.

Chingiz goes to work irate. He feels awful. Everything seems negative.

Chingiz was not able to concentrate at work. He had a lot to think about. He thought about his test results which were going to be ready in a few days. He thought about Ziba's pregnancy. He thought about Kobra's claims and allegations about Ziba. He thought about the bank loans he took out which completely wrecked his finances. For a tiny second, he thought about Sam and how no one had contacted him after the funeral. This all of a sudden prompted him to think about Sam's inheritance and make him wonder what became of it. Surely, Sam must have had some assets. What happened to them and who inherited them?

He could not make any enquiries. He dared not try to find out about it. Particularly when he did not even attend his son's funeral. And when he is mortified of hearing from any of the relatives of Sam's wife. He thought to himself:

- Oh well! It must have been certainly the relatives of Sam's wife who got Sam's inheritance. Fucking thieves. They are like vultures. Damn them.

Chingiz's views on Sam's in-laws were impacted by his greed because he believed that he was cheated out of whatever inheritance that he might have got from Sam's

estate.

It is hilarious that Chingiz never stayed in touch with any of the family members. Now he is angry because he was not present when the inheritance was divided.

He was all of a sudden hit by another thought. His other family members like his brother, Parviz, with whom he had no contacts for who knows how long. One, two, ten, thirty years? When was it that they last saw each other? Or when did he last visit his sister's and dear mother's graves?

All these thoughts kept going through his head. He was getting senile maybe. So long he has managed to keep going but the old age must eventually be catching up with him.

He started comparing himself with Ziba and realizing how she was growing up and how these were the best years of her life. That she had a lifetime ahead of her made Chingiz both jealous and envious at once.

He knew that he only had a few more years, five maybe ten years, with Ziba. But then he must pack his bags and join eternity. The same journey we all have to take one day. This was frightening for Chingiz. He who never did a good deed in his entire life. He, who knows that he has never been popular, that his callousness has caused grief for many throughout the years, is afraid of death. Afraid of what would happen to him and where he would end up, perhaps hell? Even if there are no heaven and hell for one to worry about, one cannot help fearing death.

One does not know anything about death besides the fact that the body turns to dust. But is that it? That one ceases to exist exactly as one was before being born. For it is true that one does not exist until he/she is born. So this must be also true in case of death. Uh, which . . .

He was so deep in these thoughts that he suddenly got a chill. He got up and left the store without saying a word to his colleague.

He gets home earlier than usual. When he arrives he sees how Ziba is busy with her work and Anahita sleeps in their bed. He looks at Ziba sitting on the floor in a way that her red underwear is visible under her skirt. He finds that very sexy. Without warning, he goes up to Ziba. Lies her down on the floor. Takes off his pants and starts having intercourse with her.

Ziba is not shocked anymore but is devastated by his degrading attitude. That he rapes her whenever he feels like it and that she has to go along with it without any objections. He tears apart her panties and forces himself on her. She holds her breath out of pain. She feels pain with every motion he makes, back and forth, inside her. At least she is happy that Anahita is sleep and does not have to witness such a bestial act committed by her monster of the father.

But something unusual happens. For the first time throughout his sex life, he is not able to perform. The small faithful warrior feels no longer up to the task. It may soon be time to retire after so many years of service day and night, on time and off time, through all sorts of possible and impossible missions. He should give it a gold watch for so many years of prompt service and dedication.

He is in the dumps now. He was in a bad mood before he started to rape her. Now he feels worse. His confidence is shattered in front of Ziba. He has never felt so humiliated in front of a woman in his life. His manhood has never let him down. Now he sees himself as an impotent and an old-man in front of Ziba. His glory is gone.

He tries again, hoping that this was a temporary breakdown. But that was not the case. The warrior has been relieved of its duties and has pulled out of the mission.

The blood starts to boil in his veins. He gets up while cursing at Ziba and his life. He blames Ziba for everything. He accuses Ziba of having an affair and being unfaithful to him.

As soon as Ziba gets up and wants to defend herself, Chingiz punches her in the mouth. Anahita wakes up of the noise and starts crying. Ziba implores Chingiz and says

- Chingiz Please, I beg you, listen to me. I love you. I am not having an affair. There is no one else in my life. Why are you acting like this? Why do you beat me? I am your wife for god's sake. Do I mean nothing to you? What has . . .

Ziba is tearful. She takes Anahita out of her crib and tries to comfort her, at the same time she wants to hold her in her arms so that Chingiz would not be able to beat her.

Alas, this was a futile effort. Ziba tries to get him to come to his senses, but nothing works. Without warning, Chingiz slaps Ziba hard in the face.

She loses control and falls with Anahita in her arms hitting the sewing machine that was on the floor. Anahita's head hits the machine so hard that it makes a loud noise which fills the room. Ziba is mortified. Ziba herself has landed on the sewing machine and has injured her neck. She is more worried about Anahita than herself. She is petrified for Anahita's sake. What happened to her? She is no longer moving.

Anahita's eyes are wide open but they are not moving. She lies on the floor with half her face covered in blood. Ziba screams

- Murderer, murderer. You killed my Anahita.

She takes Anahita into her arms. Anahita is lifeless. There are no signs of life in her anymore. Her skull has been punctured by the blow. Her ears bled before her blood eventually dried up. She got her life shortened by her dear father.

Ziba cries incessantly and shouts her daughter's name. She curses at god for not having mercy on her. She damns her father and her mother for leaving her in the hands of the devil. She is utterly devastated. Her dreams are dead. She is paralyzed.

Chingiz, the cruel bastard, is dead quiet, shocked by the events that led to Anahita's death. He is a murderer. He killed his child.

Chingiz sits on the floor. He stares at Ziba with an empty look as she holds the lifeless body of Anahita in her arms and cries. He sees how Ziba's dress is stained with the red color of Anahita's blood. How Anahita's bloody head lies lifelessly on her mother's shoulder. She does not move anymore. She no longer cries or laughs.

Chingiz looks at her and remembers when Anahita used to run to him each night when he came home. He remembers how Anahita used to shout Dad, Dad!

- Oh, my God, what have I done! What have I done! Answer me you damn useless being who has never helped us, the ones whom you created.

It is the first time Chingiz screams like that at God. It is now that all his pain which had been archived in his brain for good starts pouring out. His miserable life that did not lead to anything other than pain and suffering. He never got the chance to have a normal life. If his father had not left him in the lurch. If he had not fallen into the hands of the swinish uncle, Hassan. And maybe without him around, he would have had a chance to live a normal life like many others.

Ziba rises. She goes to the bathroom. Chingiz sits on the floor with his head between his hands and his face bent down towards the floor. Ziba wants to wash Anahita's face. She wants to make her nice and clean. She is in shock.

Chingiz gets up and goes to bed. He dares not go to Ziba. He knows that he must turn himself over to the police. Now he sees prison life ahead of him. Murder or manslaughter? It does not matter either way it will be a long prison sentence. He starts to cry. It is the first time in his life he cries. But for what? For having killed his baby, Anahita. For having deliberately or accidentally killed an innocent child who had

not done anything wrong!

A child who gave her mother hope and joy for the future. A child whose existence brought light into her young mother's life.

Or does he cry for his even bleaker future? Since he now belongs to the delinquent class of the society. That he is now going to be in the company of murderers, thieves and other criminals.

The idea of jail scares the hell out of him. He weeps for what will happen to him but he is also sad over the death of Anahita.

Chingiz trembles with fear. He is down and looks sad. He lies on his back in bed. His eyes are closed and his thoughts are far, far away. He has given up hope of living the rest of his life in a free society. He sees himself as a prisoner, trapped between four walls. To him, the freedom is over. He is now going to be deprived of his freedom on account of his own malice and anger. He thinks he is being punished for all the sins he committed throughout all the years.

Chingiz thinks about all the things that had preoccupied him earlier that day, about hell, about horrible deeds, about his son, his brother, his sister, and his mother.

He is convinced now that hell and heaven do exist. That good and evil are something we create and cause ourselves. If we are good, we succeed well in life. If we are evil, we are punished.

What has he done in all these years other than being mean, insensitive, cold, and egotistical? He has never made anyone happy. He has never helped anyone. He never even cared about his own children. Worse than that, he put his wives through hell and made them suffer. Why did he sleep with a prostitute and make her pregnant, bringing shame to his family, which ultimately led to his mother's death? Why did Kobra become cruel and heartless? Why did he marry a

young girl?

For his own satisfaction in life, for his worldly and sexual needs, he enslaved his nearest and dearest. He had no qualms in wrecking other people's lives for his own selfish gains. Chingiz never thought of anyone other than himself. And now, today, at this time, he got the long-due punishment for all his sins. He may now experience what it feels like to live in misery and fear. He is now been given a taste of his own medicine.

He, the cruel son of Effat, will land in a place where he will not be granted the chance to breathe a word about anything. He will be surrounded by other criminals who are not afraid to commit serious crimes like murder or assault. The kind that would rape those whom they find weak and defenseless. A rookie like Chingiz would be an easy target for the under world.

Who knows how many times he has to bend down to pick up the soap in the shower!

He knows he will not come out of captivity alive.

Ziba, poor Ziba. A young girl who lost everything she had because of life's unfair game. She washed Anahita's lifeless body and wrapped her in a bath towel. She took her in her arms and came out. She saw how Chingiz lied in bed with his eyes closed, deep in thought.

She wants him dead. Her whole life has been lost now that she does not have her Anahita anymore.

Ziba is full of anger. She is mentally crushed into a thousand pieces and physically she is critically ill. She is in such a mental state that she does not feel any pain in her body. She has got a fractured rib but has not even realized it yet because of the shock. She must be in excruciating pain as a result of her neck bashing into the sewing machine, but she feels no pain other than Anahita's death.

When she sees Chingiz lying on the bed and when she sees her beloved daughter dead in her bosom, she decides to bring the father and daughter closer together. No matter what, it was Chingiz who killed Anahita and he must accept the consequences.

She thinks that now when Chingiz did not allow Anahita to live and now when he gave her the venom of death, he must receive the same from another.

Ziba is mad. There is only one thought in her mind and that is revenge. She is blood thirsty and her inner-self is desperately seeking more blood.

The uncontrollable rage in every cell of her body calls for revenge.

She is vengeful. The desire for vengeance intensifies so quickly and so much that she does not see, hear, or want anything other than Chingiz's blood.

She has been transformed into a blood-sucking vampire that in the night's darkness desperately hovers in the air with sharp gaze down on the ground looking for wandering blood-bags—people.

Ziba's hopelessness has reached its peak. She understands the harsh reality that she cannot bring Anahita back to life again. That Anahita is gone for good. Her body has gone cold and is about to stiffen in the arms of her mother.

She goes to the kitchen, gets a kitchen knife.

In one hand, she has got Anahita's corpse and in the other she holds a large kitchen knife. She goes toward the bed where Chingiz lies dormant. She raises her hand, aims for the heart of that frozen beast and sticks the knife straight in the middle of the chest, right into the heart of the sixty-year-old creature that nobody loved.

A scream, a shout, an inarticulate sound generated by a strong shrill voice fills the entire room and breaks the deafening silence.

Chingiz opens his eyes from pain. He looks at Ziba standing by the bed with Anahita in her arms wrapped in a towel. He finds himself lying on his back in bed with a knife in his chest, so deep that only the black plastic handle on it remains visible.

His heart is about to beat the last beat.

Soon it is time for him to say goodbye to this world. These are the last breaths he will ever take.

Ziba looks at him and with an innocent smile on her face tells him

- Give my love to my Anahita when you see her. Do not be nasty to her! Tell her don't let fears bring unrest to your soul for your mother will be coming soon.

Chingiz's blood gushes out of his chest. He cannot talk anymore. His mouth is full of blood. He draws his last breath. Ziba puts Anahita in his arms and covers them with a blanket.

- Sleep you two! I am here. I will take care of you.

She says this and goes back to her sewing. She puts everything in order again, turns on the radio and starts to sew garments that Ramin is to collect tomorrow.

Ziba works until midnight without any worries, as if she has found peace within, and completes the remaining and last pieces of her work.

After she finishes her work, she packs the sewing machine and puts everything in order. She folds all sewn garments and puts them in one pile and puts the sewing machine right next to them. She sweeps up all the litter, gets a pen and paper, and sits at the table.

She writes. A letter to Ramin opening with: "To my beloved Ramin."

"The one who gave me moments of unconditional love that our heavenly God has equipped us humans with. He has given us the ability to love and to be loved.

I am writing these lines to you who gave me a glimpse of

warmth in my cold life. For you who brought light into my dark night. And to you my love, who made me feel alive again.

Unfortunately, the cruel and merciless fate has for one last time offered me its strongest blow that has taken the life right out of me. Now that God, the Almighty, has stretched out his hand and has called me to his kingdom, I must obey him and be on my way.

My Anahita has already joined her God in anticipation of seeing her mother. I cannot disappoint her because she is so young. It is now that she needs her parents.

Since I did not want you, my beloved, to be disappointed and since I did not want to leave the work unfinished, I sewed the last garments, and thus I have fulfilled my contract on this last order.

I will always think of you and will never forget those brief moments we met.

I wish you all the best in life and success in your career.

I will never forget the only sweet kiss we ever gave each other.

Your friend  
Ziba”

After she finishes her letter to Ramin, she kisses the paper which leaves her lipstick imprint on that like a seal.

She leaves the letter, along with her diary, on the table with a pen lying on it so that anyone coming in would notice it.

She tidies up the house and puts everything in its place.

She goes to the bathroom cabinet and takes two unopened bottles of sedatives and a bottle of pain-killer that were there.

Then she opens the refrigerator and takes out a bottle of cough medicine.

The sedatives belonged to Chingiz, which he almost never

used.

She pops the pills in, one handful at a time, and takes a sip of cough medicine in order to push the pills down her throat.

When she has poured all of that in herself, she throws the empty bottles and cans in the trash.

She unlocks the door and leaves it ajar so that people can easily enter.

When she turns off the lights and the radio, she goes to bed.

She pushes Chingiz further toward the wall to make room for herself beside him. She lies down on the left side of Chingiz with Anahita in the middle and pulls a second blanket over herself and them.

It does not take long before she falls into a deep sleep.

Three human beings are in their death bed next to one another.

There is a sense of angels and other mystical beings being present in the room. While Satan's disciples dance and sing for joy, the angels of God mourn the death of innocent lives, lives that have gone to waste.

At last, Kobra's sorcery seems to have worked. She wanted this marriage over and now she got her wish.

The next day at eleven o'clock someone knocks on the door. It is Ramin who has shown up as per the schedule. He notices that the door is open. No sound comes from inside the room at the other side of the door. He is alarmed. But somehow he must check out the situation. He opens the door gently and shouts - Hello! Is anybody home? Mrs. Ziba? No response. He barely dares to enter. One never knows what to expect. When he opens the door he sees that the room is tidy and everything looks fine, at least from the angle he is looking at the room. He thinks that maybe they went out and forgot to lock the door. Or maybe Ziba is here somewhere in the vicinity. He waits a minute to see if Ziba shows up or not but he is worried. He knows how Ziba's life is and that she cannot leave the house like this, unless something has happened that caused her to drop everything and leave at once. So many thoughts come to Ramin's head. He does not know what to make out of the situation. He does not know yet what has transpired. He cannot imagine the misery that has befallen Ziba and her family. After a few minutes, he decides to go in and look around. He gathers up his courage and steps inside the apartment. As soon as he comes in, he notices on his left-hand side, three people lying in bed under the covers. He feels immediately that this is not normal. That they would sleep till this late in the morning; that they would not even hear him shout; and that they would leave the door open all night. He is afraid. What could have happened? Should he go up to them or call the police or neighbors? He takes a few steps getting closer to the bed and right away

he sees their white and lifeless faces. Ramin rushes out and pounds on a neighbor's door. The horrified neighbour opens up the door and asks

- What is it . . .

- Come, come and see!

Ramin drags the man in his house-robe to Chingiz's apartment and shows him the bodies. Running away from the scene, the man says

- God, we have to call the police.

Ramin stands there staring at the bed. It is now that he grasps what has happened. It is now he has come to and looks at the three dead bodies lying in bed.

He turns around and looks around. He sees the letter. He takes it up and reads it.

His eyes fill with tears. He feels sad. He cries of desperation.

He is deeply remorseful that he could not have prevented it.

He thinks that he betrayed her. He blames himself to have not helped her earlier so that this would not have occurred.

The neighbor arrives with his wife. The wife insisted on following along and seeing with her own eyes what had occurred.

- "Dear God, from dust to dust and from ashes to ashes," says the neighbor's wife.

- I called the police. They are on their way, the neighbour informs Ramin and asks

- Who are you?

- My name is Ramin. She, Ziba, worked for us as a semesters, says Ramin with trembling voice and teary eyes.

The police and the paramedics show up. After conducting a preliminary investigation and a medical examination, they collect all the facts they need. But police wants to talk some more with Ramin because of Ziba's letter.

Ramin tells them that quite honestly they felt drawn to each other but that is as far as they went.

For the police officers, it was clear what had happened but they did not want to miss anything.

It was not surprising that none of the neighbors checked up on them or called the police since they were all accustomed to hearing a lot of yelling and screaming from their apartment. They thought that this was also one of the daily fights that this couple was having. The neighbors were even tired of this family's constant fighting but had no other choice than to stay away from them.

The police informed Kobra and Ziba's parents about the incident.

For Kobra, it was pure victory. It was as if she was born again. Now, she got to live without worries for the rest of her life. She did not want to see him with someone else but when Chingiz despite her wishes had re-married, she wanted nothing more than to destroy his life.

For Ziba's parents, the news led to days of mourning, but life must go on, and over time one has to learn to cope with the death of a loved one. The day they agreed to give their daughter away to an old man, who for all intents and purposes could have been her father or grandfather, they had already shown how much they loved her.

For Ramin, this was his first broken heart. The experience was cruel and inhumane. He liked Ziba and wished her the best in life but he never thought their friendship would have such a horrible and abrupt end.

Yes, dear reader, life is full of good and bad surprises. Many are of the belief that our fate is pre-determined. But if that is the case, then what is the function and purpose of the brain. Brain, charged with the ability to think and the power to choose the direction in life and make decisions about what is desired.

God has created us and given us the will to choose the path we ourselves want to take.

So we can only blame ourselves for what happens and stop putting the blame on God or others.

End to the miserable life.  
Go to sleep peacefully and free from pain  
continue to live in heavenly peace.

