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STARRY
NIGHTS
BABUR

Novel



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

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

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

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

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FOREWORD

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

However, because of the pressure by the Soviet regime, the novel remained unpublished for another six years.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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We'll greatly appreciate it if you contact us and share your opinion at: ilhom_tuhtasinov@mail.ru

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

I

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Suddenly Takhir grasped the girl. The chakmon¹ fell down on the ground and the fellow felt Robiya's trembling; she was trembling all over by each cell of her body.

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

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

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

"I can't bring myself to say it"

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

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

¹ Chakmon - caftan-type outerwear

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

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

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

Takhir sighed with relief.

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

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

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

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

Takhir became lost in his thoughts.

Indeed, Uncle Fazliddin lives in Andijan. He is an architect in the palace. He is also well known in Kuva. This wooden bridge over the river was built according to his plan. And when the Lord Umarshaikh liked decorated with patterns and blue ornamental tiles divanhona² created by Mullah Fazliddin, then his uncle became a very famous person! Umarshaikh gifted him a racer and a full purse of gold. Takhir heard for certain about it and that his uncle lived in solitude a comfortable life and not in the tower but in the country.

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

² Divankhona – here: reception room of the ruler.

- "Okay, Robiya, we'll go together to Andijan. But it will be very difficult to persuade my father... Is Makhmud at home?"

- "He went somewhere till iftar. He said he would be back. Why?"

- "Tell him to call on us; - I need to talk to him."

- "Okay, I'll tell."

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

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

It is better to fill the jar and go home!

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

II

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

Finally the voice of muezzin was heard from the minaret of Kuva madrassa. War goes its way but everybody needs to eat and drink and people forgot for a while about other things at the evening dastarkhan².

Takhir and his parents were eating at the table. There was a smell of hot cookies and melon. Bread was tasty and mastava³ poured with the sour milk was delicious. Takhir was slow in beginning a conversation about the departure for Andijan.

Somebody knocked with a handle of kamchi⁴ at the gate. The old mutt lying at the ash hole barked raucously. Takhir jumped to his feet.

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

² Dastarkhan - a table

³ Mastava - the name of the rice soup with vegetables;

⁴ Kamchi - a lash

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

"Who is it?" called he.

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

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

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

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

"Whose is this cart?"

The man didn't answer. Mullah Fazliddin answered:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It had been such a tiring journey for him that he didn't eat mastava. He ate two pieces of handalak⁵ and drank several pialas⁶ of tea. The coach-fellow who was also invited for the dinner, on the contrary ate mastava with sour milk with a great appetite and emptied two tureens. Then he went out to see the horse.

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

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

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

⁵ Handalak - a small honey melon

⁶ Piala - a drinking bowl (as used in Central Asia)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hasan Yakub looked with an unfavourable eye at Mullah Fazliddin:

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

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

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

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

"What kind of picture?"

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

"I need a picture of our begim!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I'm sorry but now I'm busy with other affairs... Of course it's a pity to lose one's gold... But if they didn't take your drawings, these thieves are from suburban tugai⁷. There're shelters there. God permits, we'll finish successfully with the war affairs and then by all means we'll mop up the tugai from thieves and robbers... But right

⁷ A kind of desolate spot

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

Mullah Fazliddin came closer and bent his head with respect:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“What kind of words, sir governor?”

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

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

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

Uzun Hasan was silent in embarrassment.

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

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

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

“We’ll see who will be sent when we are in Akhsi,” shouted Mullah Fazliddin being beside himself with anger.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I don't believe!"

"But I do!"

"But I don't!"

AKHSI (DEATH IS TRUE)

I

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

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

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

Until the dawn the silence in the castle was broken by a gentle-plaintive melody of the surnay⁸. Then the roll of the drum joined it.

⁸ Surnay - a musical instrument of Central Asia

EPILOGUE

By the end of his life Mavlyana Fazliddin managed to finish the burial-vault in Kabul, about which Babur told him before death, but he didn't have enough time to build madrasah in honor of Khanzoda-begim. His dream to immortalize the memory about the unusual woman probably was realized by great Hindu architects, by building the famous Tadj-Mahal in Agra, which was devoted to another woman – Mumtaz-begim, more than a hundred years later.

Having buried his uncle in Kabul, Takhir, following Khumayun's order, took the copies of "Baburname" to Samarqand, Tashkent and Andijan, where he presented them to worthy people. Last years of their lives Takhir and Robiya spent in Kuva. Their son together with sons of Mavlyana Fazliddin lived in Agra, they got married on native girls, and their descendants flew together with Hindu.

Ten years after Babur's death, Khumayun got married on a beauty Hamida Bana-begim, when their son was born, they called him Djalaliddin Akbar. By that time Mohim-begim had already died – cholera killed her. And Khanzoda-begim was still in good health, and she was bringing up the two-year-old Akbar. When kissing the boy, she repeated quite often: "Oh, Akbar – you are the very image of your grandfather! My brother Baburdjan looked like you at his two years! Not only face, but hands and legs – everything looks alike!"

Khanzoda-begim died at the age of sixty-eight near Kabul, when Akbar was three. She was buried in the burial-vault of Babur. And the ashes of Kutlut Nigor-hanum, their mother, had been moved there.

The further life of Khumayun was uneasy. His younger brothers born by another woman, Kamron and Askar, started a long war against him.

Endless wars took much strength and time from Khumayun, - he didn't manage to multiply the deeds of his father. Being a passionate bibliophile, he, however, enlarged his father's library in Delhi with rare manuscripts.

Being a warrior and participator of many severe battles, Humayun died not in the battlefield, but in father's library – he stumbled against a high marble step on the stairs, fell and hurt himself badly. Like his father, Khumayun died, not having reached the age of fifty. The grand mausoleum of Khumayun in Delhi had been built of red stone under the widow Hamida Banu-begim's will, who began to

govern the country with her fourteen year old son Akbar after the untimely death of her husband.

If you come to India, you'll definitely be shown the mausoleum of Mirza Khumayun in Delhi and Tadj-Mahal in Agra – they are the monuments of mutual love and loyalty.

There are many evidences that both Akbar and Shah-Djahan read "Baburname". They knew all the family legends concerned with Babur. Of course, these menacing rulers had their problems and difficulties, and life full of contradictions. But they also had a sense of the splendid things, like Babur had.

Maybe, when building Tadj-Mahal, Shah-Djahan tried not only to pay his debt to his untimely dead wife Mumtaz-begim, but also the debt of Babur to Khanzoda-begim and Mohim-begim, and Khumayun's debt to Hamida Banu-begim.

Among the descendants of Babur Akbar was the biggest connoisseur of creation. He took "Baburname" with him to campaigns. In Akbar's time two translations of "Baburname" were made from Turk into Persian language, the best painters of India drew great miniatures to the plot of the book.

For a long time different countries of the world only knew Babur as the founder of the empire of Great Moguls in North India, while his fictive heritage remained unknown to the majority.

But the empire of Great Moguls, no matter how famous it was at its golden age, having existed for about two centuries, irretrievably stayed in the past. And direct descendants of Babur didn't reach our age – the last of them died in the struggle against English colonizers.

Only one path remains, the one which leads us to poems and prose, written by Babur. As far back as in the last century "Baburname" was translated into Russian, English, French and German, the book found its connoisseurs in many countries of the world¹ (1Though "The British Encyclopedia" (v.3) doesn't mention anything about Babur's creations on the columns dedicated to him. This publication completely avoids his books, which, by the way, have been known and paid high tributes by such enthusiasts from England, as E. Coldwell and A. Beveridge)

It's natural that Babur's works are especially valued on the land where he was born and grew up. Babur is studied in higher education institutes and schools as the largest poet-classic after Alisher Navoi.

Babur's monument was established at the Poets' Alley in Tashkent. His gazelles are still being sung on wedding parties.

The people of India also consider fictive heritage of Babur their cultural property. Djawaharlal Neru, the great son of Hindu people, having read Babur's memoirs, called him an enchanting individual and a typical representative of Renaissance in India. And the famous Hindu writer Mulk Radj Anand said about "Baburname": "This is one of the most wonderful books in the world. It's been decorated by miniatures of painters of India justly, as it is our common property".

This is the second life of the man of a great talent and amazing destiny, who left this world four and a half centuries ago.

PIRIMQUL QODIROV

STARRY NIGHTS

BABUR

NOVEL

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