

رواية لكاتبها

ذبيبة
و
الملاء

BERSERKER

BOOKS



Saddam Hussein

Zabiba and the king



A novel by its own author

Introduction

On February 12, 2000, our Mr. President and leader Saddam Hussein, may Allah protect him, met with the writers of Iraq. He encouraged them to write novels in which events would cover all aspects of human life, that is, that each author would try to draw a parallel between everyday life and the events taking place in the novel, right down to the courage of those behind the anti-aircraft guns fighting enemy aircraft. He said:

- It is necessary to create deep works in which the reader would find history, social life and human psychology, something that he did not know before, regardless of what the plot is connected with - with the actions of a woman or a man, an old man or a young man, a sick or recovering person, a warrior who comes home on leave, with his feelings, when he returns from the front or leaves his home when going to the front.

It is also necessary that the reader, having become acquainted with such a work and understanding the main idea and the thoughts associated with it in all the diversity of this life, can, in turn, convey to others what has become accessible to his understanding.

This brilliant idea sunk into the soul of Najib Guyur, one of the glorious sons of Iraq, and as a result, a novel appeared that the reader is now holding in his hands. But due to the modesty inherent in all the sons of Iraq, who prefer to sacrifice themselves rather than

to talk about the great things that are being done with their hands, the author did not want his name to appear on the cover of the novel.

That's why it says here: a novel by its author*.

* * *

How many strange and unusual things, how many feats and glorious deeds, how many real miracles are happening in Iraq!

Isn't life, along with ordinary things, full of the most extraordinary things? In addition to the measured flow, aren't there unprecedented ups and downs in it? How can the colors of life be rich if the most ordinary things are not diluted with miracles? Will the plain please the eye of those who contemplate it if there are no mountain peaks on it?

Isn't a state determined by its opposite, and a color by its adjacent shades? Doesn't the high peak stand out against the background of the surrounding plain? Isn't Iraq and everything that was and is in Iraq from time immemorial between heaven and earth?

Wasn't it here that construction once rose to unprecedented heights, stretching from the earth to the skies, when the foundation of the building could not withstand the weight of its walls, when the sky became angry and the top and what was between the top and the base collapsed, and only part of the walls remained standing? , directed upward, as happened with the legendary ziggurat* in Abu Gharib, which was built at the beginning of the 15th century BC?

Wasn't this where one of the seven wonders of the world was located - the Hanging Gardens of Babylon? If everything were judged fairly, then half of the monuments called wonders of the world could be on the soil of Iraq.

Wasn't it by the will of Allah that Adam and Eve were sent to Iraqi soil? Wasn't Ibrahim** born here, may peace be upon him? Are not all the prophets and prophecies that appeared after the prophet Ibrahim until the very last prophet, whose name, blessed be it, Muhammad, are connected with Iraq?!

Wasn't Iraq, with its mountains and the An-Najef plateau, the birthplace of the prophet Noah, may peace be upon him, in the times after the prophet Adam, may peace be upon him?!

Is anyone surprised by something unusual, going beyond the ordinary, if this unusual thing happens in Iraq?!

Was it not in Iraq that the missionary spirit of the people, saturated with the aroma of prophecy and divine grace, was revived? Otherwise, what would connect those living today with those who passed into eternity, on the eve and in the midst of the main battle for the banner of the Arab nation to rise again after it was sullied by the proteges of the enemy and those nonentities who cast a shameful shadow over the entire nation? After the raging Zionism became embittered and entered into a disgusting alliance with America, it became almost impossible to imagine that the nightmare of the enslavement of the entire world by this alliance and the submission of the world to it could ever end or that resistance to it would bring any result in the foreseeable future. This weakness struck not only those in power, but also those whose names until recently were included in the lists of progressive and revolutionary parties, movements and personalities!

Isn't it amazing and like a miracle that Iraq stood up, saddled his horse, drew his sword and proclaimed: "I, Iraq, alone in the whole earth, declare firmly and loudly: You, arbitrariness and lawlessness, stay where you are, or retreat. This is the land of heavenly messages and prophets!" When his Lord looked at him from the heights of heaven, Iraq thundered with a thunderous voice: "We will not kneel before anyone except Allah! Let all the cowards, compromisers and would-be patriots get away. We will not give up, and let those Arabs get away." who have forgotten that they are from Yarub and that they worship only Allah!

Iraq was a country of prophets and revelations, a country of civilization, trade and purity, where plants first sprouted and milk flowed from the udder, so that there could be life and so that the world could become in all its virgin purity and sins, with all that sweet and sorrowful that is in life . Iraq was on earth, from which the door opens - to heaven for those who ascend, and to hell for those destined to burn in its flames.

Iraq is the country of Sumer and Akkad, Babylon and Assur, sedentary culture, Baghdad and Samarra, the country of glorious falcons and noble beauties, and without all this there would be no sun, and the moon would not have found its way in the sky, plants would not have sprung for joy the farmer and the envy of the infidels, and it would not rain.

On the Iraqi land, such as it is, rich in tales of exploits and glorious deeds, famous for examples of construction and faith, on its plains and mountains, on the lakes in which the North Star and Saturn are reflected on a moonlit night, you will see many amazing and worthy of surprise.

But in Iraq it is not customary to tell tall tales and humorous stories. Here they say: "It happened, it didn't happen..." This is how one old woman from the village where my family lived began her tales. I called this old woman grandma. She had great intelligence and wisdom in life, and all the villagers, men and women, came to her to ask her wise advice. In addition, she healed the residents of our village, and all the boys and girls loved her. Children, and with them adults, listened to her stories and teachings. Here's what she once said:

A long time ago there lived a powerful and important king. His fame spread everywhere and brought him respect and prosperity, love and devotion, as well as the respect and fear of those who feared him. This was even before Allah decided to draw, through his messengers and prophets, a clear boundary between what is now considered permissible and forbidden, and before people began to revere his law, his regulations, orders and traditions with such zeal as they started doing it later. People submitted to him both voluntarily and under duress, and he became the king of his time, the king of all four corners of the world. He wanted those living far beyond the borders of those places where his throne stood and his power was revered to bow their heads before him. So that the kings ruling the vastness of the ancient world would submit to him, and so that they would rule their people in his name and honor him.

Grandma interrupted her story and busied herself with one of her many activities that winter evening, and we sat down by the fire, which could only warm those who sat close to it. I did not understand the meaning of this legend, but I knew this woman well, I knew that she was wiser than those among whom she lives in our village on the banks of the Zab River northeast of the black mountain and on the eastern bank of the Tigris River above the city of Ash-Sharqat, where the remains of ancient Assur, founded in the third millennium BC, during the first Assyrian era, are preserved.

I knew that my grandmother always chose fairy tales with meaning for us. Some of them she comes up with herself, some she draws from the rich heritage of the people. She adds something to them from herself, throws something out so that the legends acquire exactly the meaning that she wants to convey to us, and so that her stories have the impact on us that she sought. In this she was no different from all other grandmothers raising boys and girls, the children of their daughters and the children of their sons. In each legend, she focused our attention on what we should avoid and what we should adhere to, and each of her legends had its own background.

All grandmothers, all uncles and aunts, who were usually older than our mothers, told exactly such tales in their time. Passing on to us stories, proverbs and all kinds of wisdom, they replaced the TV for us. Oh, if only television provided at least a hundredth part of what we received from their mouths in terms of knowledge! What can compare with these stories, which teach lessons of courage and pass on the good traditions of our ancestors to children and youth?

Our wise storyteller continued her story:

The king got bored with his loneliness in the palace, and, feeling languor in his chest, he left the city into the open air. From a distance he saw a large palace. And after he had ridden with his retinue for about half an hour (if you measure time as they measure it these days), sometimes spurring on their horses, sometimes at an ordinary pace, he discovered that it was the same palace as his,

just a little less. The king asked who owned the palace and found out that it belonged to a rich merchant who was friends with a great many rulers and held magnificent receptions there. As for his fields and lands, they were presented to him and his father by one of the previously reigning kings.

Here our wise storyteller said, as if jokingly:

Do not the friends of rulers who give lavish receptions, and those who accept their invitations and sit at their tables, bear the high ranks of rich merchants, landowners, influential people and great merchants? Are not the ruling people generous at the expense of the people to those who are not from the people? Are they generous not to the rich, my children, or do you think that you too can get something from their generosity? So one of the kings benefited the owner of the palace by granting him this palace, and you remained with your grandmother in this shack, which barely stands in the winter wind and whose roof leaks as soon as the first drops of rain fall on it!

She said and laughed, and we, the mischievous ones, laughed when we saw her thinning teeth, which time had destroyed so much that she didn't even have half the teeth left in her mouth, and the rest were crooked and ground down.

Talking about the kings and their possessions, she chewed the words, and each one spun for some time on her lips until it became distinct, as if she were weighing the merits and demerits of the words she uttered. And when she remembered how they gave her in marriage to her cousin, and the meeting of the bride price of a dozen sheep, which her father immediately took away, without leaving her a single one and without even buying her a new dress... she was overcome by melancholy, although all this happened without little forty years ago.

We brought the narrator back to reality so that from her story she returned to the story of the king, and she continued:

The king was surprised when he heard what was told to him about the merchant, and his name was Khiskil*, and his palace, but he continued on his way to a small hut located near the palace fence. And the merchant followed him on horseback when he learned that the king had arrived at his palace, but did not enter it. The king ordered the guards not to allow anyone to approach, when he drove up to the hut, and a beautiful girl in the prime of her years, whose name was Zabiba, came out of it.

Zabiba greeted the king and respectfully invited him to dismount and take advantage of the hospitality. Next to Zabiba stood an old man, apparently from her family.

The king got off his horse.

When Zabiba invited the king to enter the hut, he entered, and she seated him on a chair made of palm branches. The king noticed that the hut was clean and that all the things in it were arranged in a special order and harmony.

Haven't the intricacies of palaces, their furniture and thick walls long since become disgusting to the soul of someone who lives comfortably, surrounds himself with unnecessary objects and whose soul dies as a result, and he himself completely loses taste?

Doesn't a direct connection with nature give a special taste and the ability to choose suitable colors, just as fresh air gives a person health and peace of mind?

Zabiba answered all the king's questions about their life, and the king was amazed at the way she spoke and listened to her without interrupting. And every time she addressed the king or answered his question, she did it with dignity and respect, speaking simply and clearly, and her words calmed his soul and increased his knowledge.

The king was delighted with Zabiba.

Isn't Zabiba's simplicity and her innate intelligence, the absence of the slightest pretense in behavior, what a prisoner of his palace needs, who neither hears nor sees anything except what has long been provided for by the boring and tedious routine of his life?

But let us return to what the old woman told about the king, on whose legend the

our romance.

After the king became a frequent guest in Zabiba's house, and she began to come to him, and because of what will be said later, it all ended with him loving Zabiba with such a passion with which he had never loved any other woman before. Their wives and not a single lover. When she walked, his heart was rushing out of his chest to catch up with her, fall in front of her, warm her, or fly after her to find out where she was going and serve as a bright torch for her.

But the king did not confess his love to Zabiba and tried so that she would not notice how much he was attached to her, because his life was limited by the palace walls.

The king did not ask her about her husband and was not jealous of her, realizing that he was her husband. But the king was jealous of her for the air and the water, and even for every piece of food in her mouth. Yes, yes, the king was jealous even of Zabiba's mouth. Isn't it the mouth that attracts a man to a woman or repels her? Isn't it her mouth that a smart woman uses to seduce a man, attract him to her and not let him go, hiding his shortcomings, so that the man, once approaching, does not move away from her?!

Don't men kiss women's lips more often than all their other charms? Isn't it enough for some men to have a woman's mouth to judge purity and chastity, so that at any stage of their intimacy they can confirm their love to their beloved through kisses, which can be considered evidence of feelings, regardless of whether they had a love affair or not? Is not it? And if the significance of the mouth is so great, shouldn't a man be jealous of the mouth of the one he loves, her laughter and the movements of her lips? So it becomes clear why our mothers and grandmothers cover their mouths with a bandage in front of strangers and eat only in the presence of their relatives. The meaning of the sacred verse, which calls on women to cover their exposed parts and, naturally, their mouths among them, also becomes clear.

* * *

The king fell in love with Zabiba deeply. And how he fell in love with her, listen.

The great king ordered his guards to let the guest into his personal chambers when she arrived, but did not describe her to them. The chief of the guard was surprised that the news of the guest's arrival came this time from the king himself, but did not ask about it and did not reveal his doubts. He gathered the guards guarding the main gate and ordered them to put on ceremonial clothes and prepare to welcome the king's guest.

"Let two guards open both gates," the chief of the guard taught them, "both half inward and at the same time, so that neither half is ahead of the other in its movement. - And he also said that the guest's name was Zabiba.

When he said Zabiba's name, it didn't mean anything to them and didn't seem at all familiar.

One of the guards, hearing the name Zabiba, almost laughed, but limited himself to a smile when he saw the back of the head of the guard in front of him.

The chief of the guard left, and the guards decided to laugh among themselves, and one of them spoke:

- I wouldn't mind some raisins today*.

Another guard answered him:

-Where do we get raisins from? And

then another one said:

- Doesn't a person usually want what is not available to him?

And the other says:

- Is it really shameful, my brother, to mentally wish for something that we cannot get?

in practice?

The first one tells him:

- Why torment your soul with something that is inaccessible to a person and torments him? His

friend answered:

- The soul of a person cannot exist as a person tells it to, without hope that

that she will go beyond her limits.

And the first one answers him:

- If hope is imagined as a state of strength that a person feels within himself before making it achievable, how do we know what a dream is? Isn't it written in our family to always remain the same and guard the palace like this until we are kicked out of service, although we see that people don't like those who live in the palace, which means, most likely, they don't like us either?

- But aren't we happy that we serve in the royal guard and fill our bellies? The fact that they favor us, while others die of hunger, get sick because they cannot eat enough, and do not have enough food to feed them?

- Aren't you still tired of filling your belly when there is anxiety in your soul and no joy when the mind is in disarray and the conscience suffers from forebodings?

The one who was older in years interrupted their conversation and said:

- Truly, the dream of our friend, who wished for raisins, is unrealistic, because that, oh whom you said was the king's guest. And from her name it is clear that the king is unlikely to be interested in her and will not arrange a feast in her honor. Most likely, she was one of many, or, I don't know how, grace descended on her, and for some reason the king wanted to see her and then send her back. And besides everything else, she is just a highlight, not a raisin. What good is one highlight to you? Now, if she were a bag of raisins, then there would be at least something real in your desire. So stop talking and go about your business.

He laughed and everyone else laughed.

And so, when the guard was pacing back and forth near the gate, footsteps were heard. The guard peered into the darkness and saw the silhouette of a man. He gripped the bow tighter in his hand, took an arrow from the quiver, woke up the sleeping guards and shouted to the approaching one:

- Stay where you are!

Zabiba spoke in a trembling, broken voice, stuttering with fear:

- Please, don't shoot! I am Z-zabiba, the king's guest. The guard approached her and exclaimed in surprise:

- Zabiba? Guest of the king?

"Yes," she said and nodded her head for greater conviction.

"Come in, come in," said the guard. - Sorry, my lady, we didn't recognize you. We imagined...

- What did you imagine?

The respect of the guards restored her confidence, and now she spoke clearly again. Before the guard had time to answer her, she said:

- So tell me, what did you imagine? Your ideas were not justified, and you They were mistaken a second time, deciding that I was an uninvited guest who wanted to enter the palace and was plotting against the one who lived in it. Did you imagine that I would appear before you in a carriage and that other carriages would accompany me in front and behind me? Is it really beyond your imagination that a woman from ordinary people like you is desirable in this palace? I'm right?

"Yes, madam," the guards answered. And the one who was already in years said:

- Forgive us, madam, but imagination and fantasy are partly what can be in reality. Part of what is possible for the imagineer or imaginer, and the possibility is not too far removed from reality and therefore can be realized. How do you want us to imagine that someone from the common people enjoys the favor of the king and is invited to a meeting with him, when such a thing has never happened before?

And Zabiba added with a smile to his words:

- And even if her name is Zabiba?

- Yes, my lady.

He and the rest of the guards would have smiled if they had not remembered that she was the king's guest, and if law and tradition had not forbidden the guards to smile in the presence of the king and his guests.

And Zabiba continued to joke and asked, laughing quietly:

- Do you know how and why they called me Zabiba?

- Why? How, madam? - the guards happily picked up. And

she said:

- When my mother was pregnant with me, my family worked for the owner of vast lands that the father or grandfather of our king allocated to him for a reason that is unknown to me and about which I did not find out, although I asked. And is it really important that kings cut off the land of their country, handing it over as a reward, covering debts for gambling, or giving it to invaders who defeated them?

And although the guards were rude people, they were amazed by Zabiba's courage and what she said, so some of them smiled, and some remained silent, not expressing their feelings in any way. Isn't it with such words that resistance begins to draw the souls of people along with it? Such words awaken its seeds, and they sprout when a plan of resistance matures, attracting the attention of all sympathizers, prompting them to move in the right direction.

Zabiba continued:

- My parent was capricious, and she wanted raisins, but since

the desire was not in her power and not in the power of my father, she said to herself:

- Well, at least one highlight.

It is clear that this desire of hers turned out to be unrealizable. Therefore, having allowed me to do so, she called me Raisin, because a woman has the right to give a name to a female baby. So she realized her dream through my name after she could not get at least one raisin from the raisins she wanted. She embodied the name of her dream in me, and thus her soul and her dream became immortal, which she could not fulfill after the mercy of Allah descended on her, for she died in childbirth. And if my name had not been Zabiba, the king would not have chosen me so that I could enjoy his love for me or, at least, have the pleasure of being loved by him. Do you know why?

And before the guards answered, she said:

- Because the place of grapes is in the bins of the propertied or merchants, on the tables of the king and important nobles. When I have the opportunity, I will make sure that you try grapes and even nuts. Who knows?

Zabiba said this, smiling joyfully, and all her splendor returned to her, and although her clothes were simple, she was kept clean, and the hair on her head was in order and slightly covered with a scarf.

Then the chief of the guard shouted at them, approaching them with an important gait:

- Why are you gathered here? Come on, get to your places!

And the old guard said to him:

- My lord, here is the king's guest, Lady Zabiba.

- What?

- Yes, my lord, Zabiba, the king's guest.

Only now did the chief of the guard notice the woman standing among them and asked:

- Is it true what he says? Then he approached and asked in surprise:

- Are you Zabiba?

- Yes, my lord, Zabiba. Guest of the king. Didn't the king tell you that today will I stay with him at night? "She said this firmly and, as if to spite the chief of the guard, in a confident tone, concealing within itself the strength that comes from pride and self-confidence, because she is the king's guest.

The chief of the guard said:

- Forgive me, but...

- What, dear chief of the guard? Am I, his slave, not fit to be his guest? Or are you able to change the king's decision and his will?

- No, no, neither I nor anyone else dare change the king's decision and his will! sorry me, Lady Zabiba, but we did not imagine that among the king's guests and those who come to him, especially at night, there could be a commoner or a commoner. Sometimes on major holidays the king appeared before ordinary people to see how the people greeted him from afar, but we never had to see what we see before us now.

And then she was intoxicated by the feeling that she alone had received such mercy from the king, and she said:

- Let me be the first. Is it so strange that among those seated with the king and those who obeys, and perhaps there will be a commoner among his concubines?

Isn't it enough for noble gentlemen from rich merchants and major military leaders, ministers and emirs to have undivided control of the time and kingdom of the king? Let them continue to own wealth and the kingdom, but they will leave the king to us.

Zabiba smiled and asked a question to the guards, who listened attentively to her:

- Isn't it fair what I say? And everyone answered:

- Yes, our lady, that's fair.

The chief of the guard, casting a dissatisfied glance at the guards who were assenting to Zabiba, when they were instructed to remain silent, said:

- Forgive me, my lady, I must report you to the chief hajib*.

It became clear to Zabiba that until that moment the chief of the guard was not sure that she was exactly the guest of the king that he was told about, or could not fully believe it.

And Zabiba said:

- Do what your duty tells you.

And after the chief of the guard left, Zabiba said to herself:

- Isn't loyalty and fulfillment of duty the responsibility of each of us? Means, I should not be angry, because the chief of the guard, in accordance with his duty, wants to make sure whether what I say is true, and whether I am an impostor, and that I am the king's guest, and not someone else, and that my name belongs to me, because it is not one of the names of those whom the chief of the guard is accustomed to hear about and with whom he is accustomed to deal.

The chief of the guard returned in a hurry.

- Forgive me, my lady! "I appeal to your mercy," he said and others said flattering and ingratiating words, interrupting them from time to time with bows so that she would be satisfied with him.

Zabiba knew the reason for this, because she realized that the main hajib had shouted at him and reproached him for the delay. Or perhaps the king himself did all this. What if the king is rude in his dealings with people?

She asked herself:

- Maybe it was the king himself who treated him harshly? And

she answered:

- Probably the king was not among those who did this, but aren't those who surround the king surpass him in cruelty? Rather, they, and not the king himself, would have punished the chief of the guard.

And then she said to herself:

"Didn't the chief of the guard do what was part of his duties?" What if did everything happen the other way around? What if he hadn't found out who I was and brought me to the king, and I turned out to be not the one the king needed, what could have happened to him? So doesn't the one who is farther from the king and his kingdom have more freedom?

And she answered:

- The one who is far from the king may be freer, but this is not for me. That's mine opportunity, and it would be foolish to let the opportunity slip away, especially if it involves the king himself. And this king is the king of our state. To be far from the king means to have no effective means in life, for it means to be far from the ruler and from property, be it personal or state property. He who does not have property finds himself unarmed in the face of life, nature and its creatures. And those who find themselves unarmed can be easily overpowered by nature and its creatures. He will either be expelled or torn to pieces. The one who is torn to pieces will die and lose his freedom, because his death is not the struggle that life requires of him. And the one who is expelled will lose his freedom. Nature and its creatures will be stronger than a person who has lost common sense. The essence of the superiority of the human mind lies in the fact that he is able to invent and invent means that allow him to prevail over living beings and adapt to nature. A person will not be able to do this unless he masters these means, and property is one of them, no matter whether it belongs to all people as a whole or to each individual. Thanks to such symbols as the state and what it has, man, his mind and what man has, achieve the necessary superiority. If we desire freedom, we must not allow those in power to have whatever they want and thus deprive ourselves of freedom. And if we allow this, any talk about freedom and equality of opportunity will turn out to be empty chatter. If from the very beginning everyone had everything they should have equally, or if everyone gave up what can be considered superfluous for a person, then who would want to gain freedom and who would set off in pursuit of what is called freedom? But since all this is not true, even when everyone starts the race from the same line, some still run faster and others slower. It turns out that people are unequal in the results they achieve. Doesn't the difference in means explain why, when we cross the starting line, we achieve different results, regardless of our desires and intentions?

So Zabiba said to herself as she and the chief of the guard walked through the room of the chief guard, and with him through the inner gates of the royal palace.

Having passed the palace gates together with the main guard, Zabiba began to carefully examine the details of the palace corridor starting behind the gate. And she would have come across the king standing in the middle of the corridor and waiting for her, if she had not noticed that the main guard suddenly stopped, gave a military salute, hitting the ground with his foot, and froze rooted to the spot.

The king told him:

- Thank you. Leave Zabiba and go.

The guard turned around with the same practiced movement and left them alone.

Zabiba greeted the king and, kneeling before him, lowered her head, holding the edges of her dress so that she looked like a butterfly, although her dress was not one of those befitting a palace, and did not look like the dresses of princesses, wives and daughters of the rich people who are usually worn in the palace on days of major and minor celebrations. It didn't even look like a concubine's dress.

The king smiled, greeting his guest:

- Welcome, welcome!

He approached her two steps to touch her, slightly raised her head, and then hugged her and said:

- I missed you, my dear.

What bothered Zabiba was that the king called her dear, and she began to turn this word over in her mind, saying to herself:

- Does the king really find me cute or does he just want to flatter me? But how and why did he find me sweet, if he has to see special women, no match for me, both from among the courtiers, and from the daughters of nobles and emirs, and there are many such women?

- Forgive me, my majestic king, but how and why do you find me cute?

"You fully deserve the fact that I called you dear, Zabiba." As soon as I saw you, this word is ingrained in my soul. Since I came to your house and began to come to it again and again, when you were on the land of the one who interfered with us and whom we drove out from the land once granted to him by one of the former kings.

The king remembered how one of the former kings gave his nobleman vast lands, on which he began to breed various living creatures and various plants. And he started hives on these lands and began selling bee honey. Then this man began trading within the kingdom and beyond, and his wealth began to amount to a huge number of shekels*.

And every time this man met the king on some occasion, he told him about how wonderful and tasty his honey is, which you will not find here in the market and even among the honey that his subjects collect far from the lands and gardens of the king. . This was until the king sent one of his courtiers to buy a large amount of honey from a merchant for the royal palace. When those who knew a lot about this matter tried the honey, it turned out that it was fake. And the fraud consisted in the fact that the greedy merchant emptied the honeycombs, taking all the honey from the bees without a trace. Instead of honey, he left the bees in the hives for the winter with something else to eat. As a result, the taste of honey changed and it lost its quality compared to the honey of those bees that ate honey. Therefore, the king took the land from this swindler and again made it the property of the state.

In those days, Zabiba's father worked on the lands of this merchant, and when the lands returned to state ownership, the king left those workers and peasants who wanted to stay, and among them Zabiba's father. Zabiba soon got married. And when the king found himself in those lands, he saw Zabiba, and he liked her, and he also liked Zabiba. The king began to visit these places and fell in love with Zabiba, and she fell in love with him.

And the king said:

- The fact that I called you cute is not an empty image, but a reflection of form and content, which are combined in you.

- But there are women more beautiful than me, my great king, and I have seen many of them. Forgive me for my frankness and some tactlessness, but you probably already knew many of them.

- But I have never met one of them with such a sweet heart and soul, beauty and character like you, Zabiba!

- How can this be, O great king?

- Almost all of them tried to get closer to the king in the hope of his crown or power, and not for any other reason, but the crown is not at all more important than my personal qualities, Zabiba.

- Is it possible to separate form from content, my king? You said I'm cute and I gave reasons for this, including my beauty. Isn't the crown part of your uniform?

- The crown is part of my appearance, but not my overall shape. Besides I don't I believe that for a man, shape has the same meaning as it does for a woman. The crown is a thing, Zabiba. Is it possible to evaluate a king in terms of the things he has?

- No, Your Majesty, to correctly assess a person it is necessary to consider him essence, qualities and character, and form - in addition to all this. Anyone for whom the determining factor in evaluation is the object will value not the person himself, but the objects. Anyone who evaluates a person by the objects around him sees in a person a thing to be used and does not see in him human merits on which to rely. Personally, I cannot imagine a person as an object, even in the case of that despicable one whom you drove from the earth and dispossessed.

- I would like to talk about the specific person of the king, and not about general philosophical concepts.

- General concepts work in this case too, because they concern a person. Let's not talk about forget about it.

The king did not answer these words, but said:

- You said, Zabiba, that you cannot imagine the despicable one we driven from the earth, in the form of an object. Is not it?

- Yes, Your Majesty.

-You mean it has no value? And if he does, then

Is it so insignificant that it cannot even be called an object?

- No, my great king, that's not what I meant. I wanted to say this. Even in that case, if this person is despicable and your decision is fair, you still cannot consider him as a thing, for he comes from Adam, although he may have lost his humanity or it has weakened in him, and in every son of Adam, no matter how he was bad, a particle of a person remains, despite the fact that the bad prevails in his qualities and character, making him look like a thing.

The king said:

- But is it really possible to single out a small fraction of positive personality traits from everything? the bad that prevails in him, Zabiba?

"The reformers would try to do this, Your Majesty," answered Zabiba, "they would be able to develop a bit of the positive in him so that it would acquire a predominant character, and all the negative would move away or dissipate.

- But the king is not a social reformer, Zabiba.

- Oh, if the ruler became a social reformer, along with the fact that he is source of other decisions, things could have been different, Zabiba said.

"Not everything that a person desires can be achieved," the king answered her.

- But can't we assign someone to do this? So that he is not distracted by questions power and not be a link in its chain and so that the power does not bear responsibility for what he does?

- Nothing is impossible, Zabiba.

- I've never thought about this before. Didn't you think, my great king, that you Are you part of an organized community?

- I thought that an organized community obeys the authorities, Zabiba.

- An organized community that benefits the state, great king, it is power that creates, not his power. If the king is part of it, will it not obey the king? You can very well have an organized community, as I have described it, take upon itself the direct leadership of the people and try to correct what can be corrected, while you and those who support you take power in accordance with its hierarchy.

- But at present I and those who support me, even without an organized communities have power. And this means that power was not created by an organized community, that the idea of power precedes the idea of an organized community. But I have come to the conclusion that we need a group with certain beliefs, which you call an organized community, and if that is the name you prefer, so be it.

- Traditional authorities are able to create an organized community that you need to. But do you really want the organized community to remain an empty formality or just another screen for the government to cover up the shortcomings of its rule? Or do you want the organized community to build society and bring about a turnaround?

- I like the second option better, but let's talk about real things, not fantastic.

- By reality, my great king, you mean only what we believe we adapt and what we strive to correspond to, or also what we, by changing ourselves

the concept of reality, capable of radically changing the nature of forces and means?

- I mean the latter, Zabiba. But I also want to say that the formation of an organized community that will deeply change society, move it far forward and raise it to a new level - this is not the task of the authorities, but the task of fighters and revolutionaries. At the same time, power will generate it, and not it - power. Its tasks will be the tasks of the people, and it will exist to fight.

- I believe that there is nothing impossible in the existence of an organized community, even under the shadow of power. It may have some of the traditional community features, but not all, in which case it will change some aspects of people's lives for the better, but not all of their lives.

- How is it, Zabiba?

- When an organized community is formed and you are part of it, do part of the people and rely not on those who have extraordinary influence, high position or enormous property, but on ordinary people. Make sure that it is based on the poorest. But you won't be able to do all this until you yourself become part of the people.

- But how can I become part of the people, Zabiba, if in fact I am their king?

- You must be part of with all your soul and conscience, all your life and thoughts people. To set before the people and the organized community a high goal that would correspond to the significance of our state and its role in the life and mission of man in it. Lead the people and the organized community towards this goal honestly and conscientiously and do not allow principles to be traded. Call on everyone who is pure in deeds and thoughts to do what you call your people and organized community to do. Be honest and fair from the very beginning to the very end.

- But is what you are talking about, Zabiba, so simple?

- It is difficult, my king, but precisely because it is difficult, your success will continue. For a long time, it will not be destroyed by the winds of change, as happens with those achievements that come easily. What comes easily, people usually do not take care of. Therefore, it goes away as easily as it appeared, giving way to something next.

- You're right, Zabiba. We should continue our conversation to find out what it's still better, but we'll do it later.

- As you wish, my king.

- But before we close the door to discussion, I want to express concern that there was no confrontation between men from the organized community and government officials. What if members of this community begin to compete with those in power for their privileges instead of caring about what is good for the people and the state?

- This may happen, my king, if everything remains as it is. That is, if simply to add another name to the already existing elements of the state: organized community. But if things follow the pattern we have just spoken of, if you set goals for the organized community in the light of high goals that serve the interests of the people, if the organized community enters the arena of life in which there is room for risk and self-sacrifice, then it will receive the right to lead the people and will lead them without coercion. In this case, you will be able to distribute all the roles so that everyone has their own responsibilities and so that there are no contradictions or rivalries between members of the organized community and government officials. I believe that from a practical point of view, at any time, at any level and under any conditions, an absolute separation of these categories is impossible.

The corridor along which they walked was long and gloomy, because the candles placed along the walls were not enough to illuminate their path to the king's chambers.

Zabiba said:

- Don't you notice, my king, that this corridor, and the whole palace, seems wild and deserted?

- It may seem so because in the corridor and in some rooms of the palace there is no windows facing outside. Or maybe because this is your first time in the palace. You've never been to the royal palace, have you? - said the king and smiled.

- It's true that this is my first time in the royal palace, and I thank our Creator for that He gave me the opportunity to meet you and benefit from your kindness and favor. But this is not the first time I have entered the palace. I visited the palace of the owner of those lands whom you drove away, and his palace, as you know, is very similar to yours. They said that his master wanted to marry your father's young concubines after his death, because he wanted to be like the king and imagined that he would take possession of the throne if he had the same palace as the king and wives from among those who were concubines king," said Zabiba and laughed loudly. Then she turned to the king in a bow and said: "Forgive me, great king, it was not me, but my soul laughed at the fact that there are such people, owners of many riches and low souls."

- Are you saying that it was not you who laughed, but your soul?

- Yes, great king, if you told me to make a choice, I would not laugh at your presence. But my soul, which was not yet accustomed to palace manners, jumped out over the fence and laughed.

- You're smart, Zabiba, but why are you forcing your soul to do what it doesn't want? typical? I would like you to give your soul freedom to be natural.

"Does a simple person like me really need freedom?" - Zabiba said as if

it was not she herself who said it, but her soul.

The king laughed, and she, intoxicated by some strange feeling, added:

- The king laughs with the commoner?!

- I am the king of my great state. I love it when people are free, and I love sometimes I can joke from the heart with a commoner, but I can't do it all the time, although I would like to.

Zabiba said:

- Yes, great king, if you easily communicate with ordinary people, they return to their human form, but if you do this to puppets, they may rebel against their masters.

And she added:

- But if you really want this, great king, then why are you sitting locked up yourself in the palace?

- Am I locked up, Zabiba? The guards you saw are protecting me, not guarding me.

She is an attribute of royal greatness.

- They guard you, these guards. They guard you, they guard the locked doors and a deserted corridor, guarding the palace, in which I still have not noticed any living movement, except for the movement of your searching soul. All this, in essence, limits you. Without any intention of the guards and your servants, who are actually limiting you, and without anyone's direct instructions, you, my king, are sitting here locked up. How can you love freedom and build a palace without windows that can let in light and air? How can you love nature, want me to act in accordance with my nature, and not communicate directly with nature or at least admire it through the windows?

- Calm down, Zabiba. I'll explain everything to you. The palace has few windows for its safety. If you make too many windows in a palace, it will be difficult for the guards to guard it.

- But this makes the palace unsociable, my king. Isn't loneliness the sworn enemy of who rules? And to put an end to loneliness, you need to leave it. Leave the solitude of the palace, my king, and let your soul do what comes naturally to it. Get out to nature and people. Aren't nature and people the best thing that can dispel fear in your soul?

- I did as you say, Zabiba, or almost so, when I first entered palace, but found that the courtiers considered my behavior strange and condemned me. Perhaps they felt that the violation of the traditions of the palace was caused by frivolity or

ignorance of decency. In the end, I had to come to terms with these traditions. Can't someone who has been living in this palace for seven years have a habit?

"Of course, my king," Zabiba answered. - Habit is permissible to those who do not reject its reasons, even if the habit is bad, and therefore each person must look with all his eyes in order to distinguish what is permissible for him and what is not. You got used to the palace because you did not reject the habit and sacrificed the natural for the sake of your position and self-affirmation. As for me, I'm not yet used to the palace, because I don't want to put up with it and I'm sure that I will never put up with it. This is because I reject those premises that would force me to come to terms with this, especially if there is a choice.

- What is the choice, Zabiba?

- That you leave this palace, find yourself among people, live next to them and used their funds. Look, great king, how thick the walls of the palace in which you live are, there are no windows in them and they do not allow you to see or hear what is happening outside. The halls of the palace are designed so that you cannot even see those inside it.

- Suitable for achieving goals dictated by the needs of power and security any means, Zabiba.

- Truly, everything that I see, and much of what I hear from you, my king, burdens you, and does not encourage you to take action and solve the problems of power using means convenient for the king himself and his people. Truly your palace is a den for breeding demons, my king! This is because demons are born in abandoned palaces, and your palace is uninhabited. Its walls are thick and there are few windows. Your palace is gloomy, the air in it smells of rot, your movements are limited and monotonous. It resembles the place where Satan chose to multiply and do his deeds. And where the shaitan has settled, conspiracies are woven against the king, envy and greed arise, and the thirst for power grows. The walls of the palace do not allow you to hear what is happening outside them, to see the light and breathe fresh air, they will drown out your voice when the conspirators attack you, and no one will hear it outside, and salvation will not be able to come to you. And they will hinder your movements when they attack you. And the dark corners of the palace will help your enemies hide the daggers and arrows that await you, my king.

- Yes, Zabiba, your words are fair, but do you really want me to refuse throne and lived outside the palace, as he lived, forgotten by his father, may Allah have mercy on him, because of the conspiracy of the brothers and sons of his concubines?!

At this time they reached the king's chambers. A little later Zabiba said to the king:

- Forgive me, my great king, do you mind if we continue the conversation?

- No, no, please say whatever you want to say, Zabiba.

- You asked me in surprise, what did I mean when I said that you should to live outside the palace, as in those days when you lived, forgotten by your father, the former king, may Allah have mercy on him, but it turned out this way, you said, because of the conspiracy of the brothers and sons of his concubines. Before I answer you, my king, if you have mercy, I would like to hear this story. You said that you lived alone outside the palace, and not in the palace like your brothers and other emirs*. Did I hear correctly?

- Yes, Zabiba.

- So I ask you, my king, if you forgive my importunity, tell me this story before I answer your question. I beg you about this, because if you satisfy my desire, you will be able to understand your soul and dispose of it freely, and you will also fill my soul and mind with something that will allow me to give a worthy answer to your question. That's what I want from you. Give me a feeling of equality, even for a short while, even in a simple human sense, and I will give you something that will calm you down. And without this feeling, my king, if you simply begin to play a theatrical role, I will not be able to find such a state when my soul is calm, and I will not be able to be truly useful to you in terms of personal matters.

"You should go back to your family now so I can get back to my business."

I'll tell you all this another time, Zabiba.

Zabiba said:

- Your will, my king. When will you order me to come to you again? The king answered:

- I do not command you, Zabiba, but simply express my desire.

- Isn't the king's desire the law, my great king?

- In that case, I suggest, if this expression is more to your liking, Zabiba.

- I would like it even if your wish came to me in the form of a command,

because the main thing is not its form, but its content. Since I saw your essence in our communication, I will not attach importance to form. So when do you want me to come, my king? Today is Monday, will Friday be convenient? But, forgive me, king, Friday is the day when we worship our God and pray to him, as established by custom.

- In that case, come on Saturday, if Saturday suits you, Zabiba.

- Yes, my great king, I thank you twice. The first time for what you decided continue the relationship with me, and not immediately forget about me, but a second time for respecting my religious feelings. Saturday suits me.

She said goodbye to the king and left.

When Zabiba came out, she saw that the groom was waiting for her at the door, and next to him was a piebald mare.

And the groom said to her:

- This is a gift from the king, my lady.

- But how will I feed her? And who will watch over her? - thought Zabiba. And before, As she expressed her bewilderment, the hajib approached her and dropped a bag of gold into the saddle bag on the saddle. Then Zabiba said:

- No matter how much they revile the kings, they know a lot about generosity, but the people do not.

She said these words to herself and shuddered, feeling her conscience reproaching her. Then I thought:

- Generosity is inherent in kings and is this their quality? But isn't the generosity of the people the most best generosity? A man of the people slaughters an ox, with which he plows the land and which is the source of his livelihood, for the king when he visits him. He treats the traveler whom he has shown hospitality to with the food he has prepared for his children, and thus leaves his children hungry. So, will the king's wealth diminish when he gives a small fraction of it to someone? Isn't a simple man more noble than any king?

She mounted and went to the house.

* * *

Zabiba returned to the royal palace, as agreed.

And when she walked along the corridors of the royal palace in anticipation of the imminent meeting, she saw that at the entrances of the corridors leading to the main gallery, the queen's court ladies were gathering, whispering and laughing. But when she approached them, they greeted her respectfully and even, perhaps, with friendliness, which they tried to hide. Zabiba noticed it in their eyes. The eyes do not deceive, an experienced person will always read what the look is saying, at least if love or hatred is read in the look.

Suddenly a woman appeared in the gallery, whose clothes spoke of her greatness. But her gait and the way she treated the court ladies and servants did not add to her respect and sedateness. She was tall, and the lines of her body were amazing. Quite slender, but not without feminine flesh, tender and igniting desire in men. Everything about her was beautiful, but Zabiba could not see her soul, her heart and her features, for which she would be responsible. She could not be responsible for her external shape and body features, because they were all given to her from birth. But as for such features as morality, taste, manners, politeness, culture, education and the like, then a person, to one degree or another, is obliged to bear

responsibility for their presence or absence. The degree of success or failure that a person achieves, including in family matters and in love, directly depends on these characteristics. The relationship between husband and wife is built on them, love in all its varieties and at all stages rests on them. Therefore, everything is often revealed immediately after an engagement, a woman's first wedding night or a woman's first pregnancy, when a man and a woman finally understand what their preference was, when they fell in love, when they decided to unite.

But how to find the balance of form and spirit? How can one understand whether a preference is based only on form or whether his choice is influenced by speculative and spiritual things?

Without deigning to wish Zabiba good evening and without waiting for a greeting from Zabiba, she said, clearly losing her temper, although she tried to hypocritically hide her temper:

-Are you Zabiba?

Zabiba replied:

- Good evening, my lady.

And she continued, full of self-confidence, but without arrogance or challenge:

- Yes, I am Zabiba, the daughter of the people, and I was lucky enough to be loved by my master king

- Do you know me? - asked the queen.

- Sorry, my lady. Please don't be angry at my words if I don't express them assumption. The guess may be wrong or accurate, but I cannot decide on this, since I have not had the honor of being introduced to you before.

- Doesn't my appearance tell you anything?

- Sorry, my lady, but appearance is not always an indicator of content. In any case, it does not reveal the whole essence of a person. That is why, when you met me, you asked if I was Zabiba. If one glance was enough for you to determine who I am, then I would limit myself to the same thing, without asking questions. So I tell you that I am Zabiba, the daughter of the people, who was lucky enough to be loved by His Majesty the Tsar.

"You are a commoner, you can see it," said the queen, wanting to laugh at her a look in which she did not resemble princesses and queens. "But you cannot tell that you are the king's concubine."

Zabiba answered:

- I am the daughter of the people, and this quality, combining my appearance and my content, has become my obvious and corresponding quality. That's why I'm proud of him. And this means that customs and orders that the people do not recognize and which they do not observe even in the palace cannot seduce me. I have retained my essence and my external form and, combining these qualities, I can fully serve the ideas and traditions of the people, and not multiply the number of courtiers shackled in heavy chains.

- Do you call the courtiers chained, daughter of the people?

Zabiba answered:

"I don't mean all of them, my lady, but only some of them." Nobody chained they are in chains, they chained themselves, wanting to get used to what is wrong. Therefore, those who preferred shackles were chained in them, and those who did not want them remained free, although they did not leave the palace. Isn't freedom, like position, a feeling, my lady?

When Zabiba said this, she saw that many of the servants and court ladies who were listening to their conversation were ready to applaud her if all this had not happened in the palace and the queen had not stood in front of her.

The queen also noticed this and raised her voice:

- Enough philosophy, express yourself in a language we understand!

Zabiba said:

- Forgive me, my queen, but I am not trained in your language. I am a daughter of the people, like you I noticed, and as I said myself, there is no hope that I will speak your language.

The queen, losing her temper, shouted to the court ladies and palace servants,

who listened to the conversation between them:

- Why are you crowding around us? Go your separate ways! Everyone disperse! Leave us alone leave me with Zabiba!

The eldest of the court ladies asked her in surprise:

- And should I leave, my lady?
- And you too.

Hajib asked the same question, and she answered him the same way. And now there was no one left except the queen and Zabiba, while the rest, straining their ears, stood outside the doors. They continued their conversation, walking back and forth along the main corridor of the royal palace.

Queen Zabiba said:

- Why and how do you keep the king near you and remove him from us, Zabiba?
- Forgive me, my lady, but the king is free in his actions. Nobody is holding him back.
- You appropriated it for yourself without thinking about us.
- And again no, my lady. God forbid, we should appropriate for ourselves the king, the ruler of the people and our kingdom.

"The main thing is that he is a king," said the queen. - He should pay attention to us, big one. a portion of his attention should be focused on me, and only then let him think about others.

Then Zabiba said to the queen:

"This is the secret of why you lost your king, my lady."

- What do you mean by this? - asked the queen.

Zabiba answered her:

- Truly, selfishness, together with indomitable desires, seeking personal gain, leads to the fact that people begin to be treated as if they were not living beings, but things. People tend to think, feel and understand what is good and what is bad, and choose what is best for them.

- How are you better than us, daughter of the people?

- Forgive me, my lady, but I do not put myself above you or other wives and concubines and I'm not even trying to compare with you. However, we met - he and I - our views and feelings coincided, and something happened that you know about.

- How can the king forget our long-term relationship and be seduced by you after the first meeting and stay with you, leaving us?

- No, my lady, not after the first meeting and not at first sight. Time has passed necessary for our feelings to coincide, and from the coincidence of feelings what happened.

- Tell me, Zabiba, how are you different from us?

- Forgive me, queen, I can't. I don't want to be compared to anyone, because the one who talks about himself, is more likely to be mistaken than to follow the right path, or finds himself on the edge of an abyss rather than on a smooth slope.

The queen approached Zabiba almost closely and said:

- Look, are you taller than me, are your eyes, waist, legs, neck, skin color and... and... more beautiful than what I have?

The queen took a few steps away from Zabiba and, turning, said:

- The people must have taken root in the king's soul and the king was bored with the queen's beauty, daughters of other kings and noble people. He was tired of the concubines who were given to him by kings and emirs, and merchants from his state and other lands. He preferred the commoner to all of them.

Hearing how the queen slandered her, Zabiba became angry, but controlled herself and answered like this:

"Perhaps the king is bored with the familiar and no longer seduces him enough to continue to put up with him. Knowledge of ordinary people is what he did not find in you and in people like you. And she who does not know ordinary people and life with its laws, does not know how to manage wealth, power and high position. Doesn't know her husband's friends, doesn't know who he wants

serves and who carries the banners of his kingdom.

You have lost touch with people and do not know the rules of that life in which well-behaved people, those who do not have beautiful appearance, but lively thinking and fair judgments, win. The mercy of Allah, who endowed you with a beautiful appearance, did not prompt you to thank Allah for this with your deeds and thoughts, and therefore you cannot even dispose of your beauty. A man who is seduced by beauty, especially if he is young, and does not find good morals, prudence and taste in his chosen one, after the first wedding night will begin to look for other, more stable and influential characteristics in her, and, not finding them, will begin to look for them in others places and in other women.

Ask, my lady, the king himself what attracted him to me, and he will answer you better than I can. But since you ask me what made me approach the king and what I know about character and qualities, I tell you what I know and what I assume.

The queen was indignant and answered in anger:

- The Tsar is not a stranger to me, and after the many years we have lived together, I know him completely and in everything.

- Forgive me, my lady, and do not be offended if I say that you do not know the king of what does not lie on the surface, and of what others are not given to know about. And all because you don't bother yourself or, probably, are not able to solve this problem and see those features of his mind and soul that are not visible to others. That's why you didn't get to know him well during the time you lived next to him. And without knowing him, I couldn't understand how to become close to him and influence him.

The queen said as if she wanted to laugh at Zabiba:

- Can anyone be closer to him than me when I share a bed with him? Having said this, she laughed out loud, and was supported in this by her court ladies, maids and servants, who crowded behind the doors, and someone even opened the door so that the queen could hear them laughing with her.

- Isn't appearance something that pleases the king's eye? - It seemed like the queen didn't care. at whom do the courtiers laugh: at her or at Zabiba, as long as they do the same as her. Although it was clear that everyone laughed at her weak mind, they laughed with Zabiba at her, the queen. But Zabiba herself did not laugh. She answered the queen like this:

- No, my lady, the fact that you sleep in the same bed with the king does not make you his close. You could become closer if you entered his heart, into the very depths of his soul. It is I who are now in his heart and in his soul, and you remain outside, although I do not share a bed with him. I dared to take your place in his soul while you were on the bed with him, so he chose me and distanced himself from you.

Zabiba laughed, and all the doors leading to the hall in which she was with the queen opened, and the sounds of laughter were heard from all floors of the palace.

Then the queen shouted in rage:

- Stop it, may the Lord put you to shame, and may he put Zabiba to shame! And Zabiba said calmly:

- The One will strengthen us and He will strengthen all whose hearts have not yet been taken over by Satan and led astray from a worthy path. And may He put the stupid, cruel and stubborn to shame.

She turned and, without asking permission from the queen, left her, heading back to where she had been heading before.

* * *

The noise of voices and laughter attracted the attention of the royal hajib, who was in a room nearby. He came out, took Zabiba by the hand and led her to the room where the king was waiting for her. As was customary, he knocked on the door, entered, greeted the king and left. And Zabiba remained with the king.

After some time, Zabiba reminded the king of his promise to tell his story and said to him with respect:

- If my persistence does not offend you, my great king, I want to hear the story, which you promised to tell. Doesn't the one who loves strive to know everything about his beloved? You are my king and my beloved, so forgive me my persistence, my lord, and respect my desire.

The king said:

- I will tell you, Zabiba, this story.

And the king began his story:

- It was a very long time ago. My father married my mother at the dawn of his youth, and she was his cousin and was born in our kingdom. She gave birth to me after much torment, and my father, the king, rejoiced at me, may Allah be merciful to him. That's what my mother told me. And my father calmed down for the future of his kingdom, because his son, a man, would take the throne and would continue to hold the throne. And my mother, the queen, had a special relationship with my father, and her role in the kingdom was special. When the king was busy with affairs away from the capital, the queen herself conducted the affairs of the kingdom, to the extent that the king allowed her, and so that there was no contradiction between them. But, having given birth to me, my mother could no longer bear it, and the king again became worried about his kingdom. What to do? What will happen if they kill me? And he decided to take as wives the slaves whom he brought from campaigns and raids. Perhaps my mother herself suggested this to him when she realized that this desire had settled in his soul and he was ready to go for it. My mother believed that the new wives could not compare with her in their position, because she was the queen, and they were simple concubines, the mothers of his children. There are even rumors that she chose the first one herself.

- And then their number increased, my king?

"Yes, Zabiba, there are many of them," answered the king. - But have patience, and you will find out everything.

My mother chose the first wife for the king without his participation. She was not very beautiful, while my mother was a beauty and had an appearance quite worthy of a royal title. In this case, can a woman choose someone who is equal in beauty or one who can compete with her? My father married this concubine without much desire, only for the sake of his wife, so that she would not feel jealous of her and so that their happy life would not be darkened. But my mother did not take into account that in relationships between a man and a woman, appearance is not always decisive. My father took this concubine as his wife, and she bore him a male child, and then a second and a third. This is how my father achieved what he wanted and what he talked about when he was worried that something would happen to me. After which he took himself another wife, this time by his choice the best of the concubines in beauty, education and good behavior. Doesn't someone who marries a second time leave the shell of a negative view of remarriage? Is it, as the proverb goes, that one whose clothes are wet is afraid of rain? Based on this idea and wanting to give birth to as many sons as possible, so that they would form a solid basis for the reign and become swords around the crown prince, that is, around me, my father continued to marry his concubines and give birth to sons. And among all his sons I was the only son of the queen. When my brothers grew up, my mother became undesirable among his wives, for when she was among them, or rather at the head of them, they felt the bitterness of the obvious difference in their position and influence. When people paid attention to her, their chances of being noticed decreased dramatically. And the one who stood out among them, that is, my mother, was a stranger in their understanding. Don't those who are especially special envy them, and don't those who are envious hate them? The foothills are not always proud of their peaks. They feel their heaviness and send destructive earthquakes upon them.

The king said this and smiled at Zabiba, but it was clear that he was saddened. From time to time he sighed so deeply as if he could not breathe. And when a tear rolled down his cheek, Zabiba stopped it with her fingertips and wiped it on her cheek. She did not cry with the king, so that he would not have to think about her, instead of experiencing the grief that he talked about. She wanted to listen to everything and then share her thoughts with him.

considerations, that is, what she considered necessary to say to the king.

The number of the king's wives and the number of his slave concubines increased. When he was tired of one, he became favorable to the other, and so they continuously took each other's place, claiming a special position in their relationship with him.

And they all took up arms against my mother, and my father, under the influence of rumors, began to belittle the role of my mother.

"Do even kings really believe more in what they hear than in what they see and feel?"

- thought Zabiba, listening to the story about the king's

father. And the king continued his story:

- And then the day came when my mother fell ill and died, may Allah be merciful to her, and the cause of her death remained unknown.

- Could anyone but a woman have broken her and killed her? Zabiba said about herself, and said out loud: "Truly, a woman, if she wants, will get a man to his guts, and when she plots against a woman or competes with her for the one she loves, she will completely wear her out." They tormented your mother, my king.

The king smiled sadly and said:

- I lived among all this and felt that everyone around me felt for me hostility. And not only my father's wives and slaves, but also my brothers, although I did everything in my power to maintain good relations with them. But my position as the sole crown prince, and the fact that my mother was the king's cousin, made even my brothers jealous of me. Only I, in my position, was suitable for the role of king, while they all stood a step lower, and none of them stood out among all the others and was not inferior to them. They were all still boys, and none of my brothers could claim to somehow stand out among the others. I do not deny, Zabiba, that I myself did not feel any desire to maintain friendship with those among whom I lived.

- This is quite understandable, my lord. Can a bird get along with another bird? breed, especially if she sees that their beaks are trying to pinch off her flesh and drink her blood?

Zabiba said this and stroked the king's face, not allowing herself more, although from time to time she wanted to kiss him, especially when she saw how anxiety gripped his soul and how bitter and painful memories echoed in his imagination. But she did not allow herself to do this, so as not to interrupt the thread of his thoughts and memories of his father.

- The day finally came when everyone took up arms against me - my father's wives, my brothers, as well as many courtiers. I don't know why the courtiers took their side and why my sisters did not act like their brothers.

- Apparently, my great king, your law does not recognize the inheritance of the throne women, which means that men are superior to women in everything. Since this is the way it is with you, the girls did not find any reason to be imbued with the hatred of those who thirsted for power and those of the noble people who supported them, having their own interests and pleasing their masters.

- You're right, Zabiba.

The king continued his story and said:

"At that age, when I had not yet reached maturity, my father expelled me from the palace. True, he did not tell me that he was expelling me from the palace, or more precisely, from the royal palaces, but said that I would live with one of his cousins in a city far from the capital. I collected my things and clothes and went to that city. When I left, all the servants in the palace were sad because they loved me, and they tried their best not to shed tears, fearing that my father's wives, seeing this, would drive them away or make their lives unbearable.

- Do you see, my king, how faithful a simple person can be? You must have treated them mercifully and respectfully, so they sympathized with you, and their hearts were with you at that moment when you left the palace and when those who had influence and power,

have taken up arms against you. Do you know why those who had influence rejoiced at your departure from the palace, my king?

The king replied:

- This is the main question for me: why did they make me expelled from the palace, and why they were so happy about my departure.

- They did everything to expel you from the palace in order to unite their interests and to get rid of the crown prince keeping them in line when the king is not in the palace, that eye of the king watching them everywhere when you are old enough to do so. They made sure that you did not interfere with each of the emirs and those who stand behind them to obtain the right to inherit the throne and that all emirs were equal and there would be no special ones among them. After which a struggle for power unfolded, in which everyone had a chance for success, and everyone tried to take advantage of it.

"What you say is true, Zabiba," said the king. - This is the main reason that allowed me after the death of my father, return to the palace and assume royal powers. Then warriors and statesmen who did not want my expulsion stood on my side and became my defenders, and with them and ahead of them were my loved ones, who did not take part in the palace fuss and were not interested in it. Therefore, the courtiers and those who wished to banish me hastened to abandon their plans as soon as I won the first victory for the right to wear the royal crown, and sided with those who were with me and supported me.

- Yes, this is what happens in government. And in relationships between people, built on in human terms, respect and love, everything happens differently.

- You're right, Zabiba. There is nothing to do, it just so happens that I am a king. But how can you manage to love me so that my royal origin does not affect you in any way?

- My love has no goals, my king, and since it does not pursue any goal, I don't strive to achieve anything, then over time I will feel with you as if you are the same as me. Nothing will stop me from loving you, and you will be able to love me, despite the fact that you are a king.

"Perhaps," said the king.

And Zabiba said:

- Perhaps this means that the door will open for the one who stands in front of it, and that everyone who strives has their chance.

The king continued the story and said:

- Almost all my sisters cried bitterly, and I will not hide from you that the relationship between me and sisters were the best and most sincere. They mourned me bitterly and at every opportunity, so that their mothers and other women of the king did not know about it, they visited me. Thus, through them, news reached me about what was happening in the palace. Naturally, I learned that after I left, the palace turned into hell. My father grew old, there was no end to the conspiracies, and people who had nothing to do with them could no longer bear it all. Evil multiplied, intrigues wove between my father's wives. Each of them was plotting something against the others, striving to be ahead and above the rest.

- This happens among ordinary people too. When everyone is equal and it's a matter of making a decision, which concerns everyone, everyone strives to take a more advantageous position," Zabiba said to herself, without interrupting the king's story.

And the king continued:

- Behind each of them there was a battle formation of slaves, courtiers and military men, and all of them, even the maids and palace cooks pursued their own goals.

- And even the cook, my king?

- Even the cook, Zabiba. Cooks in royal palaces are very important figures when intrigues are woven, including conspiracies with a fatal outcome. Some wife would single out one of the cooks and order him to prepare a dish that the king loved. And then she told the king that she prepared this dish with her own hands, because she knows how the king

loves him. And this could only be done on a certain day allotted to her. Another cook could spoil the dish by over-salting it or putting a dead rat in the meat, thereby breaking the spell of one of the wives against the other.

- Are dead rats really taking part in palace intrigues?

- Yes, Zabiba, this happens too. Used for wiles and snakes in fruit baskets.

Often the king executed the one who gave him a basket of fruits, in which there was a snake, even if it was not poisonous, believing that she was plotting something against him. It got to the point that my father, the king, may Allah be merciful to him, stopped eating and drinking what they offered him, but met with them occasionally and no longer than an hour, so that he would not have to taste food or drink in their chambers. And the king appointed, in order to protect himself from these intrigues, one of his daughters (who was born by a concubine, who left no one else behind and died immediately after giving birth) to serve him food and drink and supervise their preparation. Life became a little easier for the king, but the day came when this daughter fell in love with a courtier connected with some of the warring circles. And he, taking advantage of her feeling, seized the moment and poured poison into the dish that was served to the king. My father died. But I didn't dare accuse my sister of treason and decided to find out everything myself. And then the truth was revealed, and it turned out that my sister was innocent. But what happened to her became a big lesson for everyone, including this woman.

- What was the lesson for the woman, my king?

- The fact is that a woman may be more insidious than a noble man, but scoundrels will always surpass her in this.

- But isn't it more valuable what you, my dear, should have learned from this story? tsar?

- Of course it is, Zabiba, but what exactly do you mean?

- I want to ask if the multitude of wives and slaves of the king is not the main reason that there were gaps in the palace?

- Yes, Zabiba, that's how it is.

- So why don't you, my great king, limit yourself to this?

- I limit it. As you can see, there are few women in my palace compared to

How many of them did the kings who came before me have?

- There are few of them compared to them, but by our standards there are still a lot of them, great tsar.

- You are right again, Zabiba, but kings measure everything differently than you.

- Yes, my king, but when the concepts and norms of the king and his people come closer, some unanimity necessary for the kingdom to strengthen and the greatness and power of the king to increase.

- Do you think that there is no need to have many sons who will become my support? in misfortune and sorrow if they suddenly appear?

- But will all those sons you dream of and whom you will be able to give birth be able to compare in number with the whole people, with half of it, or even with a quarter?

- No, Zabiba, but why did you ask this question?

- I want to tell you that in order to gain real protection, you should go in a different direction. You must make sure that the people take your side.

-Who are these people?

-Who are your people, my great king? Well, first of all the soldiers of your army, but only not mercenaries and foreigners, who are the majority in your army.

- Is this possible, Zabiba?

- Perhaps, my king, if you want it yourself.

* * *

The wise old woman said that the king became jealous of Zabiba even towards her husband. So he constantly picked on her because of him, but he did it carefully. She answered him:

- What can I do? Think and judge for yourself. He is my husband according to your law, and I

forced to do everything he asks of me. But what I am forced to do does not yet reflect my desires!

And when he answered her that he knew this and understood everything, they both laughed, considering this problem unworthy of their attention and not capable of interfering with their relationship. Their love did not weaken because of this.

* * *

Once Zabiba came to the king's palace. And the king, who had given his whole life hostage to his love for her, even if it was secret, noticed when he went out to meet her (and his intuition rarely deceived him) that she was not the same as she was when they parted for the last time.

And the king said:

- Recently, Zabiba, I began to notice that you are worried about something. I have tried think about everything that surrounds us, and all the relationships between us, but I could not find the reason for your concern.

- There is no worry, my king, believe me.

- But I see, Zabiba, that you are restless. I don't see anything making you happy and brought joy to your soul. Nothing makes you happy. Even our relationships took on a tinge of routine and ordinariness. And since monotony and turning over the same pages of our relationship day after day evokes boredom, sadness has probably settled in your soul and is pressing in your chest.

- Yes, my great king, monotony and repetition that cannot be avoided monotony evokes boredom, but no repetition causes boredom if a person desires it with all his heart, if he strives for it with all his feelings and with all his soul.

- How do we understand this, Zabiba?

"Isn't it common that the sun rises and that it sets?" Aren't we used to such phenomena as the rising of the moon or the blowing of the northern winds, refreshing a person? Can food and drink get boring?

- That's right, Zabiba. You can't get tired of all these things, and besides, you can't live without them. to be life itself. Nothing can replace them. And what a person cannot do without cannot make him bored or make his relationships ordinary.

-What do you mean by his relationship, my king? As I see, you began to reason about human concepts in relation to oneself!

- Yes, Zabiba, I do this in order to find out what haunts you and understand how dispel your worries and your sadness.

- Why do you need all this, my king?

- I don't need anything, Zabiba, except for you to be happy and for joy returned to you.

- When did you notice in me signs of what you are talking about?

- A few weeks ago.

- This is because all this time our opinions differed before we managed come to one decision?

- I asked myself the same question, Zabiba, but I realized, at least for myself, that disagreements did not cause me anxiety or sadness, because they are commonplace. Moreover, these differences weakened as we got to know each other and we began to have common views on the world.

- But you cannot judge the strength, patience and feelings of people by yourself, my king, because other people may not have these qualities in the same form and to the same extent as you. It turns out that your comparisons and conclusions are unrealistic.

- I agree, Zabiba. That's why I told myself that no one knows Zabiba like she does.

herself.

- But you also know me, my king.

- I know you, but you refute my conclusions and thereby express doubts about

that my intuition is enough to understand you correctly. But before I say that since I was unable to find out the truth about your condition, then my interest has ended there, I ask you to let me know whether I or someone else is to blame for this, and if I am to blame, then how Why. If you give an honest answer to my question, I will have the opportunity to find an effective and practical solution, but if not, I will never know anything, I will be tormented by guesses and doubts, and a solution will never be found. In any case, the fact that I will not know the reason for what is happening to you will mean that you reject all my attempts to help you.

- But I said that there are no grounds for such an assumption, because I don't see nothing that would make you doubt. I'm happy, but I worry about our love.

- Are you haunted by my love for you, or do you doubt your own feelings?

- No, I'm calm for you, and for myself too. But I'm in awe when I imagine I can imagine the happiness that I experience because our love has become so unprecedented. What worries me is that our love is no longer ordinary. She rose to incredible heights, went beyond the limits of the visible and the tangible, the limits of what can be heard or read, and reached a height that no one had ever reached.

- What allowed you to reach the top will help you overcome it and climb to new ones height. If we do not value what helped us reach a certain height, it will be impossible to achieve victory over a new peak.

- You began to speak in military terms when you spoke about victory over a new peak!

- Yes, Zabiba, for the ascent of love means victory over everything that this love hinders and prevents you from rising to new heights. This resembles a fair victory over an enemy who has encroached on what is dear to us. Isn't the lack of love in a person a condition that weakens his role and his qualities, that is, himself? Isn't it natural that a person loves a person? That he enjoys playing his role? That he loves people in order to serve them? And that in himself and in what surrounds him, there are those factors and obstacles that do not allow him to behave naturally? Are they preventing you from mobilizing all your energy, feelings and abilities, preventing you from reaching new heights?

"Your words are true, my king," said Zabiba, as if making it clear that he won't be able to find out much about her.

The king fell silent, not believing that Zabiba had revealed to him everything she knew about herself, and dissatisfied with her answer to her question.

He fell silent so that an argument would not flare up between them, and began to calm himself so as not to give vent to anger and say that he was confident in the correctness of his guess and in the fact that what Zabiba had told him (although there was something in him from which one could become anxious about his love) is still not the true cause of her condition.

And he began to reason to himself:

- It is important that I am able to find reasons to explain the phenomenon, although she does not want to open them to me, and it is also important that I can correct the situation and return her to a feeling of happiness and joy. All this is pleasing and reassuring, although I will have to be content with only what I know about this woman in the hope of understanding what is on her mind. Doesn't a woman hide her secrets from the man closest to her, discussing them with those who are not at all close to her? Isn't she different from a man who trusts his secret only to someone who knows how to keep it, in that she reveals secrets at her own discretion, obeying some voice in her soul? If a man trusts his secrets to a woman, then it is rare that a woman will reveal her secrets to a man, even if he is the person closest to her. A woman prefers to trust a man with other people's secrets rather than her own. Therefore, if you want to find out a woman's secrets, you should deal with her friends and those women who are closest to her. If a woman does not want to share her secrets with a man close to her,

This means that what she does not want to talk about may cause his displeasure. I can well imagine why she does not want to help me find out the cause of her anxiety, thereby refusing my help, which could get rid of it.

There is nothing else that could be taken into account as the supposed cause of the anxiety in which Zabiba was (and she was somewhat upset, but not depressed), except that her husband, whom she had avoided for a long time, coming up with one excuse after another, he forced her to be intimate.

Zabiba understood perfectly well that her husband had a legal right to intimacy with her, but her relationship with the king seemed to be increasingly burdened by her relationship with her husband. She never expected that the king would love her, and did not strive for this. Purely feminine curiosity pushed her to check the truth of the king's feelings for her.

Zabiba was looking for a reason to be convinced of them, and thought to herself that it was best to test the king's feelings for her by telling him about some aspects of her relationship with her husband, for example, that she had married him under duress. Telling him about her personal things, she noticed that the king was not at all embarrassed by the difference in their position. On the contrary, the king himself sometimes revealed his secrets to her. Each of them seemed to have found someone to whom he could tell about his difficulties in order to ease his soul and throw off the stone from it. At the same time, the king sometimes made fun of her because of her relationship with her husband.

The king said again:

- I see you are preoccupied with something, Zabiba.

- There is a heavy burden on my soul, my king. Trust me, what happened happened "against my wishes," Zabiba answered him.

The woman was in a difficult situation, and he believed her, but began to think about myself:

- Does Zabiba want to get rid of her relationship with her husband with my help? Or she wants to draw my attention to something that, in her opinion, I do not attach importance to? What will happen if I openly confess my love to her and free her from her difficult relationship with her husband? Is love forbidden? She married her husband in obedience to her family's wishes, so it appears that her marriage depended on the family's decision. And if she fell in love with me, this decision belongs to her alone. Isn't there a difference between someone who makes decisions on their own and someone who simply carries out someone else's decisions? I have to tell her. I must save her from this nightmare.

Then he thought:

- What if she doesn't want our relationship to turn into marriage? Didn't she live?

she is with her husband and did not have intimacy with him?

And then I thought again:

- But she can tell the truth about the fact that she was forced to enter into a relationship with her husband, fulfilling the duty prescribed by their relationship, and this example is one of those when a person does for another something for which he has neither the desire nor the ability.

He again began to make fun of Zabiba, whom he loved with all his heart, reminding her of what she had with her husband.

Zabiba got angry and said:

- Believe me, my king, I felt as if I was not taken, but beaten with a whip. What could I do? What would you do if you were me?

The king answered her sharply:

- But how can I take your place, Zabiba? How can the king be in place? women?

Zabiba, outraged that he was angry with her, said:

- Yes, a king can be like a woman!

- How is it, Zabiba?

- A king can be like a woman who sleeps with a man who is strange to her, if he does not lead his army to protect the state from invading foreign hordes. Is not it

talk about many kings around us? They do not take revenge for their violated honor and for the honor of their peoples, and even the woman behaves differently. Do not many of the women fight the invaders when their country is attacked by enemies, while the men are busy fighting on another front?

The king was angry when he heard what Zabiba said, but he kept his promise to himself that he would treat Zabiba as an equal and replied:

- If what you are talking about can be said about the kings around us, that is their business. If you are you say that those kings can change roles with women and lie on the bed with their husbands, let them change. But be careful, don't make the mistake of thinking that what they say about kings in other states can also be said about your king! And in general, in everything that concerns me, you better hold your tongue and choose your expressions before saying anything. Don't go beyond what is permitted.

- Oh, that's how it is? Hold your tongue? Didn't I tell you that it's impossible for did the king speak to the commoner as equals?!

Seeing that he had treated her cruelly, the king stroked her on the head, and then said himself to myself:

- I wonder if her husband kisses her on the lips? And then he answered his own question:

- Her husband is the charge d'affaires of one of the emirs. He doesn't love her, so it's unlikely kisses on the lips. Don't people only kiss the lips of those they love?

When he confessed to her what he was thinking about, she answered him:

- First of all, I want to tell you, my great king, that love is confidence. the one who loves, in the one he loves. Love does not obey class laws, which means that this feeling is also characteristic of kings. Love is the quality of someone who loves, whether he is a king or a commoner, a fisherman or a peasant, a commander, a worker or a policeman. I fell in love with you not because you are a king. My love is a manifestation of my freedom and my human nature. I believe that you also fell in love with me not because I am a queen.

Zabiba shuddered when she accidentally said: "or to the police," and corrected herself:

- No, not the police. Your policemen are not suitable for this role, my king.

- You believe that my police officers have shortcomings that deprive them human form and do not allow them to love the way all those you spoke about love?

- No, my king, God forbid that I insult your policemen. But are the police can someone love?

The king answered her without hesitation:

- The police in any state are like their king, and if the king can love, This means that a policeman can love too. And if the king does not have human qualities that allow him to love, then the police do not have them either.

- Yes, my king, that's right. But our police are not like you.

- Why is she not like me?

- By your behavior and your morals, my king. From time immemorial in your state her hands are untied in relation to the people. She believes that she must constantly keep people in line.

- What do you mean by this?

- The police are pursuing me so much that it has become unbearable. I can't even breathe of my own free will, as my freedom requires.

"Didn't you say that you are free in my palace because, thanks to your love for me and my love for you, found your soul after losing it when you got married and submitted to the wishes of your husband against your will, only because it was prescribed to you by a marriage from which there was no escape?"

- Yes, I almost died, I lost everything human. I didn't think that my the choice will fall on you. And he fell on you not because of the royal throne, but because I found in you

the qualities I was looking for. Yes, my king. You gave me back my freedom again, I regained my human form.

- What happened now?

- My freedom is under threat, great king. Am I not free to be in bed with my husband? - Zabiba asked.

"Of course, you are free, if that is your will," answered the king.

- Yes, I wish it, if you are against it. But this desire is imposed on me, and I will resist him if you don't mind him.

- This is the structure of the soul of a common man, Zabiba? Is the king's will really so burdensome for the people?

- Yes, my great king, because the king will be one of us if he gives us freedom, and he will not be one of us if he deprives us of this freedom, and we prefer someone who is the same as us.

- It turns out that I fell in love with someone different from me.

- This is not so, my king. You fell in love with the one who suits your nature, constrained by the royal crown and hidden from you. As for me, I don't have the royal crown on me. Yes, I can't wear it even if I want to.

- Do you want a crown, Zabiba?

- Yes, my great king, I need her, and I need you. But I want each of you separately, and not as one whole. I want the crown if you will be its master and not its prisoner. I don't want the crown to rise above your head and you to be its hostage. I want you to tower over me and be at the same time next to me and in my soul. So that you can be the conscience of the people, their symbol, a knight, and not a sign of their weakness. I want the crown on your head to be your symbol, and not your mistress and chains, and that we, you and I, would be like two souls in one body, and the crown would be a symbol of our honor, not shame. In this case, your crown will not take possession of me, but on the contrary, it will free me, even if it is on my head and if I own it, like you. You will rise above my head, higher than the crown. And above you and above me will be our freedom, the ideals of our state, our nation, our people.

After listening to Zabiba, the king said:

- I fell in love with you in order to raise your and my dignity with sincere love, in everything its magnificence and in its full meaning, and not so that either of us two seems weak. Therefore, I do not agree to share you with someone you do not want, and I am not sure that his participation is appropriate here.

Zabiba said:

- You are right and wrong, my great king, and forgive me if it seems to you that I say somewhat arrogantly. But who is your friend: the one who tells you the truth, or the one who believes you?

- The one who speaks the truth, Zabiba. But what do you mean by this?

- I chose you in accordance with your laws, which leave me the right to choose. I also chose you to enhance your dignity with my love. I open the door to people's love for you. People will love you when they realize that you love them. The love of the people, and not the crown, strengthens dignity, my king. If you think that you can raise my dignity only by bringing me closer to you, without love and freedom, and the love of the people will come to you when they learn about how you brought one of his daughters closer to you, you are wrong, my king, because if you don't love the people, you won't love me, and I won't love you, because in this case we will turn out to be two different people, each from his own environment. It will turn out exactly the same as in my relationship with my husband, who, as you say, does not see my nature in me and treats me like an object. So imagine, my great king, how a person behaves when he is treated like an object. Doesn't he rebel and look for a new way to exercise his right to choose?

- That's right.

- I chose you to use my freedom as I choose and in my own way.

will. This way I can express my "I" in our relationship with you. In a relationship with a commoner like me, you also prove yourself, but when your police are constantly following me and when you are angry with me just because my husband has intimacy with me, my relationship with you becomes a burden for me. You deprive me of freedom and do not allow me to dispose of my human nature and feelings at my own discretion. Therefore, you have become equal to my husband, and now I have the right to seek... - She fell silent.

- Look for another person?

- Forgive me, my great king. This is because love strengthens the one who loves deeply, and gives him freedom of thought and decision-making, and also strengthens in him such high qualities as honesty, virtue, courage, frankness and faith in a just cause.

Zabiba raised her head after lowering it, saying all this.

- There are few kings who draw their strength from these concepts.

- Yes, Zabiba, a little. But all the kings of our state, who had glory and power in history, drew their strength precisely from these concepts. Or at least part of them.

- So you say: glory and power in history. But not all kings have a name in history. Our kingdom was given glory and power. Therefore, among them, the one who was famous for his thoughts and deeds became famous when he made these concepts the source of his power. But isn't it, my king, the most important thing? Didn't the people, with their qualities inseparable from these concepts, with their glorious history, inspire the one who became famous for good deeds to become like that?

The king said:

- Yes, Zabiba, you said it right. Because it doesn't matter whether the people were inspired by what they inspire from good qualities, or the king drew these qualities from another source, whatever it may be. If good qualities had not attracted the people, the king would not have been able to become famous for them, because one can become famous for great deeds, and the king is not able to accomplish great things alone without a great people and a great nation. Doesn't the top of a mountain depend on its base and its height?

- Excellent, my king. You are a king, but now you often speak just like the rest of us, and often you understand the same way we all understand. That's why I fell in love with you, my great king. Yes, the great king is famous for his great deeds. But all his accomplishments are carried out by the people.

- You said "often", and that's all? - the king asked in surprise. - But I speak and understand just as you speak and understand.

- Yes, my king, lately you have often begun to speak and understand the same as we do, and that's enough for now. I say "often" and not "always", because if you understood, acted and felt the same as we do, you would move from our world to another world. Not in our world and, of course, not in the world of kings. After all, the world of the gods is very similar to this world, despite the fact that the gods here are material. Doesn't that king who understands everything and behaves and feels like his people and the sons of the nation fall into the category of gods? But aren't the gods the embodiment of the qualities of the people, the conscience of the nation, the feelings of the poor and their purity in a king who loves his people and is expected to make his people happy and dispel their sorrows?

- You said that I often, although not always, look like you and that for this you like me I fell in love, Zabiba. What if I achieve perfection in those qualities that make me similar to the sons of the people?

- If you fully acquire all the qualities, you will become a god or like a god, my great king, and then I will not be able to love you or will not want to.

- It's clear that you can't love me. But why would you stop wishing me if I become a god or like a god?

- Because I am a man, my king, and I fell in love with you as a man. I want you to remain a man of flesh and blood, so that I could love you like a woman, and not worship you.

- Is it really impossible to simultaneously combine elements of the divine and human, Zabiba?

- No, my great king, in this case it will be the worship of a man-god. That's if elevate human qualities to the rank of an object of worship, then you will become a king who will be loved just like a god.

- Despite your sharp tongue, I love you. And do you know why, Zabiba?

- Forgive me, my king, I don't know.

- I loved you so that my insides would not wither and so that I would not move away from life. To remained close to the people, was part of them and led them with him. I do not wish to become one of the gods standing in the sanctuary and taking the vows of the worshipers. I want to live with you and among you, to meet the sunrises with you. I want us to inhale the air and the aroma emanating from palm trees together, smell roses, pray for those who have passed into another world, eradicate betrayal and everything bad.

When the king said all this, Zabiba listened to him peacefully, but when he came to the phrase "eradicate betrayal," she shuddered and the pupils of her eyes widened to the limit. She muttered:

- Don't kings love betrayal, don't they weave conspiracies and betrayals in the corridors of their palaces and even in the chambers of their wives, concubines and slaves? No, our kingdom, or at least our king, does not have what other kings have. In terms of his qualities, he is more similar to us.

Then she continued out loud:

- When a king rules, who is close in character to the people, his qualities, those who bring him closer to the people are tested as he forgets about the misfortunes he experienced in his youth, and the royal arrogance gets the better of him. Only if the king is devoted to the cause of the people, if he fights for them with a sword in his hand and risks his royal title for them, will he be able to lead us to the heights of glory.

The king guessed what Zabiba was talking to herself about and said to her:

- I already understood what I need to show my human essence, so I won't go astray. And if you find treason anywhere, it will not be on the throne of our state. Or, more precisely and correctly, it would be to say, not among the sons of our state.

- But I am afraid of your shaitan, my king. After all, it is Satan who creates treason. Isn't it does he sit in each of us, my king? You and I have put our people together, so they can take over and force you to betray your cause, and even the Shaitan sitting in me can force me to betray you, but will not force me to betray the people, or let's say this: the souls of the people are stronger, while the souls kings weaker than him. When the shaitan hints to the kings that they may lose the throne or, by resorting to betrayal, retain it for themselves, or when other temptations seize the kings, they succumb to their weakness and temptations. And this also happens when relatives encroach on their throne and power.

Having uttered the last phrase, she noticed a suspicious movement behind the curtain. At this time, the king stood facing her and with his back to the place where the movement was. Suddenly a man jumped out from behind the curtain, clutching a sword in his hand.

Zabiba shouted:

- Be careful, my king! - and rushed forward with all her might to shield him. She I managed to notice that the one who was clutching a sword in his hand, wanting to hit the king in the back, was his cousin, the commander of his army. At the decisive moment, Zabiba's chest appeared closer to him. She slowly sank to the floor and screamed:

- This is the betrayal of the royal houses, great king!

The king was ahead of the traitor and was the first to deal him a crushing blow to the head. In the corner

he saw one of his wives ready to receive the news of the king's death.

The king returned to Zabiba, hugged her, kissed her and said:

"Didn't I tell you, Zabiba, that you will never betray me and that the Shaitan will not will it get the better of you?

- No, no, I won't betray you. Kings are betrayed by those who deceive them, by those who share with them power, and their emirs. It is they who betray, my king.

"Shaitan pushed them to do what they couldn't do with me.

- Be careful, my king. What will happen if the emir or someone in power will he plot against you and send one of the people to you with a knife, one who is unable to resist the Shaitan? Truly, my king, power itself is Iblis.

From that day on, the king swore that he would live for the people and for their sake and would not trust either the king, or the emir, or the keeper of the royal staff or the royal seal. He swore to live outside the palace, never to enter an abandoned house* and to burn incense in the fields and on the graves of the sons of the people.

* * *

After a conspiracy was organized against the king and he emerged from it unharmed, and Zabiba was seriously wounded, struck in the chest by a traitor, she lay in the king's personal chambers in his palace. Doctors visited her, and the king did not part with her until the treatment was completed. The king reclined in the next room so that she would always be nearby, and from time to time he visited her in order to inquire about her health. Whenever Zabiba's condition allowed her, she spoke to the king or he himself began the conversation. One day, when Zabiba was lying on her bed, a conversation happened between them.

- What do you think you'll do, great king?

- About what?

- Regarding the conspiracy directed against you and against the royal power, of course.

- I haven't decided yet.

- But your enemies have decided and have already begun to carry out their plans. You you need to think about how to resist them, and if you don't, they will continue to encroach on you. They got ahead of you to prevent you from accomplishing what you are planning.

- But the one who attempted to kill us, Zabiba, has already been killed.

- The one you killed, my king, is just a claw of one paw, but all those who wants to kill you and take over your kingdom, or perhaps join such people, or push them to kill you.

- You're right, Zabiba, but what should we do?

- Someone should be assigned to measure the depth of the conspiracy and find out to what extent it has spread. Only by knowing this will you clear up the picture of the conspiracy. And now it's difficult to say anything. Perhaps this messenger is among the conspirators, or that doctor over there," she said and pointed her finger at each.

- What interest do they have in joining the conspirators, Zabiba?

- Verily, one whose soul is devastated can pursue his base goals and be convinced that he is right. And then any of his goals will be an excuse for him to participate in the conspiracy.

- And even a messenger, Zabiba? What purpose can a royal messenger pursue? siding with the conspirators?

- I gave these examples just to attract your attention, but I also I'm not blaming anyone, I'm just imagining. You can imagine this or that circumstance, then think about how real it is. But this, of course, is worse than knowing for sure. And I took the people who were in this room, that is, the doctor who treated me, and the messenger whom you assigned to me to fulfill my requests only as an example.

As for the accusation, it should be made by investigators and judges when they have

evidence against the suspects. And regarding what interest the messenger might have in joining the conspirators, I will say that his role can also be subject to consideration. Anyone who is not attracted by the role and who is unable to rise to it can slide down to it due to conflicting aspirations.

- Are you thinking about conducting an investigation and arranging a trial, Zabiba?

- Of course, my king. Isn't this the correct way to determine

the scale of the conspiracy and find the conspirators?

"But thanks to this, the news of our shame will spread far beyond the borders." palace, Zabiba. And then others, having learned that someone has already dared to plot against the king, will weave plots against us.

- Truly, it is better to know everything that happened in detail, in colors and colors, as it was, than to leave it out of sight. Bad phenomena do not disappear on their own just because they are not noticed. Any situation of this kind requires correction. Knowing the matter as the person concerned presents it is often, especially when it comes to power, better than being left in front of a wide swathe of uncertainty and allowing those who care about it to say whatever they want, spreading rumors among people.

"But isn't it better to bury the corpse than to leave it lying on the ground, Zabiba?"

- Of course, my great king. But sometimes, when an animal is killed, its corpse

They leave it on the ground for a while so that people can see it, and only then they bury it. They do it so that rumors don't spread later that it was the corpse of another oppressed person.

- But solving such a problem is not easy.

- Yes, my king, it's not easy, but this is your task, and you must solve it. You need to know when, how, where and who does such things.

- Yes, Zabiba, everything is true, but this path is difficult and sometimes thorny.

Zabiba answered:

- This is the role and responsibility of the king, my lord. His path is difficult and thorny, and all because it does not recognize one side, one state or one color, and it does not have one clear direction. Colors and states change constantly along with the colors of life, its motives and direction of movement. It will be even more difficult if the king does not want to be a color among other flowers, if his movements and rhythm do not correspond to the movement and rhythm of life around him. If he, having chosen a color for himself, stops at it and distinguishes it from all the others. If this color is the main feature of his personality, if he chooses for himself movement and rhythm that are convenient only for him.

Then the king said:

- Be that way! I'll have someone get to the bottom of this.

- If you allow me, my king, I will ask you to order the arrest of all those who knew about impending conspiracy and did not warn you about it or take part in it.

- One of them is the one who wanted to kill me and wounded you when you covered me with yourself, my beloved, faithful and devoted Zabiba.

- One is just the tip of a poisoned arrow, my great king, that's why it's so it is necessary to find a bow and a quiver, and even those arrows that were not fired because the opportunity did not present itself or because the circumstances and the nature of the target did not yet require it.

- But the killer held a sword in his hand, he did not have a bow, Zabiba.

- I speak only allegorically, my king. Every concept that I mentioned can be attributed to a person. An arrow symbolizes one person, arrows symbolize many people. The quiver may symbolize those who organized and prepared this hostile act. The bow signifies the choice of a plan and the means to implement it.

- Now everything is clear, Zabiba! We will certainly find out everything when we gather those who will search for the truth. And we will throw in conclusion everyone who deserves it.

After these words, Zabiba said to the king:

"In that case, we'll have to immediately grab some of those around us, otherwise in their despair they will attack us. Some of them were with the killer, there can be no doubt about that.

- But I didn't notice anyone next to him, Zabiba.

- Your wife, the queen, was with him, in a place that was remote from her chambers. She came to secretly and probably played a role in what happened.

- Is it possible for a woman to play any role in the conspiracy?

- Yes, my great king. Roles in the conspiracy are signed between all the devotees business. And if a man has his own responsibilities in this matter, a woman can have them too.

The king said:

- I noticed her and was surprised by her presence. I had no suspicion that she I didn't come here by chance, or, more precisely, I didn't ask myself the question of why at that very moment she was there.

Zabiba said:

- Some kings doubt everything, so they have no conviction left

which their conscience would rest on and on which their reflections would be based. They are torn apart by doubts, as if for the first time they saw life and its paths before them. We don't want you to be like this, and we don't wish this on you. But there are also those who are not subject to doubts, because they do not listen to their soul and their surroundings, and do not attach much importance to them.

- Does this description also apply to me, Zabiba?

- No, my king, God forbid me from such a thought. I will punish myself if I will offend you unfairly. But what made you not attach importance to the role of the queen, as you yourself described it, came precisely from your doubt that she played such a role. And all because under no circumstances and under no circumstances could you assume that she was your enemy. And also because of your sense of unlimited power, which allowed you to not take precautions and became the reason for the carelessness that lured you into a trap. You also think that if you accept something and reject something in relationships with people, then other people will do the same. Due to a lack of experience, this leads to errors in assessing people, because not all people are like the one who controls them. They will be bad if you treat them badly, and good if you treat them properly, but your influence on their qualities will be very small.

You ignored her as a person and left her for other wives and concubines. That's why you didn't attach any importance to her presence and didn't bother to ask why she was there. You didn't spare her a glance and acted towards her as if she were a simple thing. Better to say, you looked at her as one of those who is usually supposed to be behind the curtain in order to appear on time and fulfill all your demands, serve guests or perform guard duties, and not as a queen or at least as one of your wives .

- So, Zabiba, do you think that she should be captured and thrown into prison?

- No, my great king, if you don't mind, I propose to keep her not in prison, but in a secluded place, and her case should become a corpse that should be buried immediately. I believe that it is best to keep her in the palace, but not in your private chambers. Let someone serve her, but not one of those who served her as a queen. The one who will serve her and protect her must receive clear instructions from my lord the king. The most important thing is that these instructions should contain language such as "allowed" and not "prohibited". If the one who will be responsible for this matter gets confused and something is unclear to him, he must immediately come to the king with it.

- Why can't it be determined what is prohibited?

- If you establish what is prohibited, the boundaries of what is permitted will expand to infinity, and everyone can interpret it in a way that suits them. At the same time,

If what is prohibited is established, each interested person will consider it his duty to introduce new prohibitions at his own discretion. Bans can be established, but not in this case, my great king. This is permissible when it comes to a law for the people, in order to give people a wide space for activity and judgment and so that people know what is prohibited to them, remember it and do not commit what is prohibited.

- But why not leave with her those who served her before, but be sure to replace their new people?

"Because she is still considered a queen," said Zabiba. - Like a queen, she retained a huge influence on people, especially on those who served her. When she is in the new place that you choose for her, people who previously treated her like a queen and who have formed a certain attitude towards her will behave towards her in accordance with her title and perform with pleasure or without pleasure all her orders. If she orders them, they will allow her to go wherever she pleases, let anyone she wants to see her, and she can even spy on you. Don't queens spy on kings?

The king laughed, and Zabiba smiled.

- You are extremely smart, Zabiba!

Zabiba said:

- Life made me like this, my king. The

king answered:

- I also live this life, and I am older than you, but I don't know those things that you know you, although everything you talk about is before my eyes. Only when you speak do I understand that all this is correct.

- Forgive me, my great king, for being frank with you. If you see that

I crossed the boundary of what is permitted, I beg you for forgiveness and appeal to the meekness of your disposition and your generosity.

Zabiba said to herself:

- Don't people turn to kings for leniency, glorifying and extolling them, filled with humility and obedience, regardless of whether they deserve leniency or not.

- Speak, Zabiba.

- I saw life in all its delights and sorrows. When I choose what I want attracts in life, or what I want, I can't always get it, and if I manage to get something, it turns out that it's only a small part of what I wanted. And all this despite sacrifices, fruitless attempts and painful waiting. I live outdoors all the time, my skin is burned by the July and August sun and the winter cold. Every day in this life I have to deal with people with whom I would not like to communicate, and walk on paths that I have no desire to follow, and most importantly, I am deprived of freedom of choice. Your life is completely different. You hardly see daylight, direct sunlight rarely hits you, and as soon as you get a little cold, they will immediately give you a blanket, or someone will come who will warm you with her body, or they will prepare a drink that warms your body and flies away your soul.

- But I appeared in this palace not so long ago, and before that I lived outside of it.

- Yes my Lord. But you lived in another palace, and people revered you as an emir.

And now you are treated like a king. You were and remain deprived of the pleasure of living among people. You were deprived of the experience of communicating with people who, if necessary, would honestly, openly and without special intent tell you "no", instead of always saying "yes", with a certain benefit in mind. Do not most of those who live in palaces flatter the king when he is at the height of his power, and strive to destroy him as soon as he weakens?

- Yes, there is something in this. We can say that this is exactly what happened with mine

exile, subsequent coronation and conspiracy against me. But is it really honorable to be an ordinary citizen? Isn't it more worthy to be a king than an ordinary subject, Zabiba?

- The sense of citizenship and responsibility of a citizen is much more more honorable, because all this is an honor in itself, my king, it cannot be inherited or received as a reward. But no honor will have any meaning unless it is preceded by a deep sense of citizenship and a sense that this is the main honor in terms of the country to which you belong, the nation and the people, the performance of duties and duty. He who has this feeling carries his banner with honor. Being a king is also an honor, but the people do not consider it an honor that does not correspond to the concepts that we just talked about, that is, if we are not talking about civic feeling and the honor of being a citizen.

I have lived a life, my king, that you never had the chance to live. You have not experienced its course, unburdened by the sins and worries of the palace. And when you happen to do something in this life, you act like a beginner who has been allowed to chalk up victory over an opponent by an experienced player, or like a child whose father is teaching him to play. You feel pleasure in what you manage to do, and by your actions you can win, but this does not happen because of your own foundation and not because of the abilities that you acquire through trial and error, ups and downs, getting into trouble.

- What can you say about me, Zabiba?

- Despite the form of which you are now the embodiment, your essence can turn you in such a direction that you will consider it possible and correct to communicate with me, a representative of the people devoted to you, my great king.

- Be that way! But you speak of me as if I were isolated from my subjects and

I don't see them.

"The most important thing is not that you see them, my lord." The main thing is that they live in your soul and so that you know them. So that you live among them and understand when and why they agree, and when and why they disagree. So that you gain such an experience as if you were one of them while ruling over them.

- But I had to meet ordinary people when I lived outside of this palace I met with guards, gardeners, and sometimes cooks.

- So be it, my king, you had to deal with them.

- But that's how it happened! I met them!

- Forgive me, my lord, I'm not saying that you're deceiving, I don't doubt in your words. Bearing in mind that most kings are liars and deserve to have their words doubted, I believe that you are now telling the truth. I put the word "so be it" next to the word "had to" and said "so be it, you had to deal with them," wanting to show that there is a difference between the state when the emir meets with those with whom he sometimes meets, and the state when a person lives among other people. You met a guard who gave you a greeting, making you feel like you were an emir. You met a peasant who bowed before you and froze in place when you passed by, showing you that you were an emir. You met with the cook, but only to give orders about the cooking. Have you ever tried to hit someone, and have you ever been beaten to teach you how to fight, so that after you fall, you can get up and return the debt to the offender and bring him down in your place? Have you tried to walk barefoot on the ground to experience what beggars feel? Has it ever happened to you that you wanted to eat something, but could not get food, having learned what hunger is? Have you ever had to ask for a loan to buy a piece of bread for your family or pay rent for a house to understand the feelings of those in need? Have you, as a simple person, tried to convince a woman that you are worthy to lie with her, so that after that your relationship becomes stronger? Does the one who should sleep with you have the right to refuse this?

- As for the latter, she has the right to agree or refuse.

- But are all the women in the royal palaces in the same conditions so that

Can anyone resist the will of the king? What if a woman willingly refuses to sleep with you?

The king answered:

- The main thing is that she is free in this.

- No, no, my great king, the one you want will go to you no matter what.

conditions, and it does not happen that thousands of kings vie for her, as men vie for us in ordinary life. There is always one king. And when competition is replaced by a monopoly, freedom of choice disappears. If you eliminate freedom of choice without providing an equivalent alternative, then you are offering an unimportant product.

- Am I an unimportant commodity, Zabiba?

- No, my king, but you have the legal right to make sure that the people live

Fine. You can become its influential and powerful leader. And I want to become your faithful assistant, who will support you in all these endeavors. If we both fail, then I will return to my normal life and to my previous state. And you will join the cavalcade of kings, whom I called unimportant goods.

- You decided to leave me, Zabiba?!

- No, my lord, not at all. I decided to always support you since you allowed me to be close to you, and I already had the chance once to show my devotion to you. I am a part of my people, and in my conscience there is a part of their conscience, and if you and I don't succeed, it will mean that you left me. And this will happen if you go one way, and the people another, if each of us joins his own circle: you will stay with the kings, and I will return to the people.

- But even ordinary people are not always right, Zabiba.

- Yes, but aristocrats do not always take the right position, my king, even in to your standards. Only the general opinion of the people, as the quintessence of their existence, turns out to be true in the case when they themselves manage their freedom, and the aristocracy is fully responsible for what it does, my lord. As for individual cases and exceptions, there is a separate discussion about them. In terms of what we talked about, the position of the people in relation to the king, who distanced himself from them, will be correct.

- What can make the people trust the king, Zabiba?

- The reason for trust lies in honesty. The king must be honest with himself and with their people, to defend the interests of the people, and not their own, to connect their conscience with the conscience of the people, to rejoice and mourn with them. He must give all of himself to the people, avoid his desires and learn from the people to be equal to him.

"But this is not one quality, but many qualities," said the king.

- Yes, my king. Is one quality enough to be a king?

- Isn't the king the top of the pyramid of society and not its head?

- Will the top of a mountain be a peak if it is no different from the slopes? If

If you assume that one quality is enough for kingship, then why do you require many positive qualities from a person so that he has the right to be called your subject?

- What positive qualities do I require from my subject?

- So that he would be loyal to you and not betray you. To obey yours orders and at the first call he joined the ranks of your army. To fight and not retreat, that is, to be brave. So that he will not be indignant when you take his land and grant it to the emirs or when you expand the boundaries of your property. All these qualities, great king, are necessary to be your subject, and you yourself, being at the pinnacle of power, limit yourself to just one quality, believing that it is enough for you to be a good king.

- You are very sharp-tongued!

"I know this, and that's why I ask for your forgiveness, my lord." I appeal to your generosity, but not out of fear of your whip, but so that you understand what role I play. So that you become such that I would be proud to be next to you, and your people would be proud that you are their king. Now tell me, my king, what to do if one of the sons of the people is worthy of the title of king or emir? Isn't it believed that the king's heir should be his own son or brother? This is where laughter and sin sometimes come out. Why do we think that the son of a king is somehow favorably different from a common man? Why does the king's son receive power just because he is the king's son? Why do he, his uncles and brothers receive power by birthright, and not based on their abilities, not on the principle of fair competition in serving the people and the state? They must earn this right in the eyes of all the people.

- Truly, the son of the people cannot rule, Zabiba!

- Why is this, my king?

- How can a carpenter, blacksmith, peasant, merchant or soldier manage the affairs of the kingdom?

- They will all be able to cope with this, my great king, and perhaps even better than some kings and emirs, because they have a sense of responsibility. They will be able to do this if they are put in the same conditions and given the opportunities that the crown prince or emir has. I dare say that, from my point of view, all these people are better than any emirs. But since they were in different conditions from the very beginning, and everyone has to start the test from the same starting line, without taking into account the difference in their capabilities, it is quite obvious that the results will be the way those who are already in power would like to see them. It turned out as if the son of the people could not stand the test, and the emir or crown prince won a convincing victory over him. The same thing would happen if traders with enormous financial capabilities competed with those whose capabilities were much more modest or who were still new to this business. Which of them will own all markets and goods? Even if we conduct a competition in the field of trade with theoretical equality of opportunity, some of the competitors, due to monopoly and competition, will be able to deprive other competitors of any opportunity. Would such a competition be fair? Imagine, my king, what the results would be if some merchants did not enjoy the influence of those in power who benefit from their work! Where do small traders care?

The king replied:

- It is quite natural that in this situation everything happens exactly like this and that Everyone achieves different results.

- In that case, compare this situation with other situations and think about the results of the competition that suits the authorities and the forces in which are distributed unevenly. This will be the answer to your question.

- So what should we do, Zabiba? - said the king.

- You must become a living part of the people, their conscience, thoughts and deeds. Get in dialogue and contemplation, an idea of what is right in your actions and thoughts. To experience life in all its details in real conditions, and not as the intermediaries between you and life show it to you, embellishing it. Move away from the wording "Crown Prince" and allow all those endowed with sincerity and ability to strive for this post. Eliminate the possibility of being an emir by right of inheritance, so that this title is transferred legally, and its owner becomes the one who deserves it, and not the one who was born at a certain time and in a certain place. Make sure that twenty or thirty people possess this title and its privileges, and that claimants to it from a variety of capable and respected people, including from the people, challenge it on equal grounds. Determine a monthly reward for them from the treasury in order to prevent their attempts to rob the people and save the people from their encroachments.

- Why not let them engage in trade and those things that they

are they engaged among the people so that they can provide for themselves, and not wait for rewards from the treasury?

- They rob the people, my great king, and do not work. They exploit it, not take care of him. Only those who, in a competitive environment, are in the same position as others and know that they have a chance, work freely and honestly. How can an ordinary person compete with an emir? They will start from different points and arrive at different results that are not based on merit and do not meet the requirements of fair competition.

"I agree with you," said the king and added: "What if the king dies or is killed in war? Who will then take over royal power?"

- You can gather emirs so that they can freely choose the king himself worthy among them in accordance with the rules established for this case. If everyone is equal and free to choose, they will be able to choose the best.

- What to do with the problem of acquired experience? - asked the king.

- You must cook them under the same conditions, as if you were going to make them. They are the council with which you will consult on issues of power. You must participate in all decisions that this council makes.

- In other words, you propose to change the order of power in the kingdom, that is, you are destroying the kingdom from its very foundations. How can one who bears the title of emir, even if we accept your proposal, do what a king should do? Emirs are not kings to sit with them on equal terms and make decisions independently.

"I'm not going to undermine the foundation of your kingdom, but I propose to lay for it new foundation. After all, if the foundation is unstable, how can you build a strong building on it? If we want to build a strong building that would protect us and serve as a strong shield, it is necessary to rebuild its foundation. The Council of Emirs and Nobles will make decisions not on its own behalf, but on yours. It doesn't matter if you make some decisions on behalf of this meeting, and some on your own, and even if you consult in making decisions with those you elect, so that decisions are made on the basis of dialogue and are balanced and prudent. I have heard more than once that in some kingdoms the emirs sit next to the kings, which makes it seem as if they sit on equal terms with them. In most cases, decisions are made on their behalf as if they were making them as equals, but in reality the opposite is true. Some emirs and kings manage to make decisions directed against the interests of the people and the nation, and this causes disdain for them and their people. Sometimes they allow foreign armies to take liberties in their states or give part of the lands into the ownership of foreigners. They arrange all these matters themselves, and make it clear to the people that these decisions were made by the council of emirs, on whom the fate of the people and the kingdom depends.

Isn't this strange, my king? My God, if kings had shown in their relations with their people at least part of the flexibility that they demonstrate in front of foreign rulers and which is nothing more than ordinary servility, their crowns would remain with them, and the people would sing their praises during their lifetime and carry them their coffins in their arms after death.

- Will my people sing my praises if I do this? And will he do something like this when I die?

- Yes, my king, time will pass, and people will carry you in their arms. You will live in them hearts, and they will take care of you and protect you.

Zabiba said this, but thought to herself:

- During their lifetime, kings often arrange their death. Instead of in order to do good and thus obtain a worthy place next to our Lord, they strive to get what they want during life. They are atheists both during life and after death. So where will God's grace come to them?

She spoke the last sentence out loud, and the king heard it.

- Do you believe in a god other than the kind of gods we believe in, Zabiba?

- Yes, my lord, I believe in one God, in the one who created you, and not in the one whom you created or whom I create for myself. I do not believe in those gods whose images are created by a carpenter, coppersmith or stonemason.

- What does the Lord you worship look like, Zabiba? He's bigger than us gods, whom we carve from stone or marble, cast from gold or silver, each as best he can?

- No, my king, He is not material.

- He is white, like the kings who come to us from distant countries, or black, like our slaves? Or dark-skinned, like the majority of our people? Or maybe someone else?

- This is Allah, my great king, and He, praise be to him, is the light that covers all the heavens and all the lands. It was by him and by his all-encompassing will that everything in the world was created.

- Maybe he is a blacksmith or a carpenter? Or?.. How did he create everything? What is his craft?

- His craft is will and power, which contain everything, my king.

- But how can one create everything that is around us, Zabiba?

* * *

The waiter knocked on the door, asking permission to enter. He brought an infusion of flowers in a teapot, and with it that which is used to sweeten the infusion after the cup is filled with it, and remained standing motionless with those who accompanied him, for, according to the custom of that time, they could leave their master only after how they will fulfill everything prescribed to them.

Zabiba turned to the king and, winking at him, said:

- The servants do not leave, my king. Perhaps they are waiting for you to allow them to leave? Seeing Zabiba wink at him, the king was embarrassed because he had never found himself in such a situation before and because people usually winked when they were flirting in the presence of strangers or giving a sign to someone who had not noticed something. Among the kings, this custom was not used, because kings do not need to wink to flirt or warn someone, there are other means for this. And also because the kings speak sedately, and not with signs, and no one puts a lock on their language and prevents them from expressing their desires. They can freely express their admiration for those around them, and do not have the need to wink, as Zabiba did.

The king allowed the servants to leave.

Then the attendant said that they had come to serve the king and find out if the king wanted anything else and whether the king would like the infusion when he tried it.

Zabiba winked at the king again and said:

- Since the king has allowed you to leave, put the infusion on this table, and if the king if you need anything else, I will do everything for you. I have already recovered from my illness and can fully serve my king.

The king turned to the servants and ordered them to be left alone.

When they left, and one of them was probably still at the door, the king wanted to drink from the cup, but Zabiba was faster than his hand and whispered in his ear:

- No, my lord! Please don't drink this. The king, taken aback by Zabiba's sudden movement, asked:

- Why not drink?

- Now I will explain to you.

When the sound of the servants' footsteps had passed away, she whispered to him:

"I'm afraid there may be no malicious intent in this, my king."

- Explain to me, I don't understand anything.

- This could be a new poisoned arrow that they want to shoot at you, and at the same time me.

- But chamomile infusion is not an arrow!

- I figuratively compare it with an arrow, meaning that this is a new means by which

someone wants to poison you and me and thereby cut off your trace and the trace of someone who can become a witness and reveal someone's evil intent to the people. And so that our doubt is replaced by confidence, send this infusion to someone you trust so that he can find out if there is anything harmful in it.

The king said:

- That's right, Zabiba, that's what we'll do.

After some time, news arrived about the results of the test, and it turned out that the infusion was indeed poisoned. After the summoned specialist told him this, the king turned to Zabiba and said:

- If it weren't for you, Zabiba, your king would have disappeared. If it weren't for you, my beloved, by God I swear I would perish forever.

- I ask you, say: "If Allah had not had mercy and made it so that we loved each other, we would all have perished long ago." Isn't the people the shield of the kingdom and not its sword? And isn't the king a symbol of his prosperity, wisdom and conscience, his glory among other nations? Isn't he the hand of the people, bearing the banner, and his pride at all times? Didn't I tell you, my great king, that Allah protects the righteous and that the people are the guardian of the king's house, his pure and true word and deed and his creative ability?

"Yes, I swear by Allah, if it were not for Allah and the people, we would all be lost," said the king.

Zabiba noted with pleasure that the king swore by Allah for the first time. She had never heard this from him before.

* * *

Zabiba's health became the same as before. Now she rode between the house and the royal palace on a white horse and wore beautiful clothes from those that the king gave her or she bought at the market. Every time she left the palace, she greeted the guards at the gate, but did not limit herself to nodding her head or raising her hand, as emirs, noble people and courtiers do, but responded to their greeting with a word. She would stop at the gate to ask how this or that soldier lived if she had not seen him at his post for a long time. And when they told her that he was ill, she visited him at home or sent him a bouquet of roses that she had picked in the palace garden. When she left the palace, her companion carried food and sweets from the royal table for them. And when she returned to the palace, she carried with her what she had bought for them. She asked the peasants in the palace garden about their lives and, if she saw among them an old man who had been bent by years or broken by poverty, she ordered him to rest for several days and not work. It was exactly the same with the servants, and everyone in the palace, except the emirs and princesses, the nobility and former close associates, rejoiced at what Zabiba did and spoke of her with love. Rumors about her spread outside the palace.

When Zabiba returned home, her husband greeted her more joyfully than before, and showed desire for her even more than before. But day after day she felt more and more torn apart, especially when she was in bed with him. She understood that her soul remained in the royal palace, and her body was on the bed next to her husband.

- Doesn't the soul live separately from the body? - she asked herself and answered: - The most beautiful person is the one whose soul is with his body. Isn't a person, from his very birth and throughout his life, a spirit in the flesh? And isn't the soul separated from the body only after its death? Is a dead person more attractive than a living one? It turns out that I am dead in my house and my corpse is rotting while I am on the bed with my husband, for my soul is not with me at this moment. My soul, disembodied and imperfect, is there, next to the king. And although she shines so that the king's soul becomes clearer and so that he takes control of himself, it still seems to me that she is missing something that can make her perfect. And since I feel this division, it means that the time has come for decisive action. I need a solution that will connect my soul and body and allow me to get into the best possible shape. Are people not in paradise in the form of souls pleasing to Allah, praise be to him, and by his will in the best of their states?

* * *

When Zabiba returned to the palace again and sat down next to the king, the king said to her:

- Last time the servant and his attendant interrupted our conversation when they brought infusion of flowers.

-Which side of our conversation do you mean, my king?

- Our conversation is about your Lord, Zabiba.

- Yes, yes, we talked about it. Do you notice, my great king, how life distracts people even from God?

The king said:

- Yes, I haven't seen my god for a week now. This is because he is standing in the hall, the key to which was either lost somewhere in the palace, or for some other reason, I don't know for sure.

- But I can see my God every second, and not on this or that day or hour, my great king.

- How can you see him, Zabiba, if you are in the palace, behind his thick walls?

- I see God in my soul, my king. Didn't I tell you that He is the source of everything? light, that He is around us, that He is inside each of us? He is our creator and our master.

- Well, does your God see you, Zabiba? Does He see those who believe in Him, like you?

- Yes, my king, He sees me and sees everyone who believes in him. He always sees us and everywhere, when we worship him and when we are sincere in our prayers, when we pray to him to send mercy and blessings, He sees us and hears us. He sees someone who does not obey his will. He sees everything and hears everything and gives punishment and reward to everyone according to his deserts.

- What, your God still hears you?

- Yes, our Lord hears us when we turn our prayers to him with all our hearts.

- And our gods do not hear us until we get closer to the place where they live. They hear and see us only when we approach them within sight and so that nothing interferes with them. Therefore, they do not see us when we leave the place of worship, but hear us only when we are there. They hear us when we bring them gifts and offerings, or so their servants tell us. Through these servants we receive news that our gifts and offerings have been accepted and that God is pleased with us, so we think that he saw and heard us.

- Are your gods visible?

- Yes, Zabiba, you can see them.

- And even try it by touch?

- That's right, you can touch them.

- And they answer you?

- Yes, they answer, as I already said.

- How do they answer you?

- They respond to us when they are satisfied with our affairs, for example, when We make sacrifices to them. The more sacrifices any of us makes to God, the more pleased God is.

- And this god of yours should be with everyone who believes in him, my lord?

- Yes.

- The king has his own god. Probably, courtiers, emirs, large merchants, traders. It turns out that your god is not for all people, my king.

- Everyone who wants and can make himself a god according to his capabilities.

- What opportunities are you talking about?

- About material things, of course. That is why our gods differ in size, material, from which they are made, and according to the splendor of the construction of the places where they are installed.

- It turns out that your gods are material, my king?

- What do you mean by this, Zabiba?

- I want to say that you can see and touch them.

- Yes, you can see and touch them.

- So they are created from matter.
- Yes, that's what they are.
- In this case, why are their gifts not material and cannot be touched? Why they are not paying you for your gifts and offerings?
- What do you mean by this, Zabiba?
- Why don't they pay you the same? Paid - received.
- But this is the principle of merchants, not gods. We do not bring our gifts to get something in return. We... - The king fell silent.

It was clear that the king wanted to say that they might not bring gifts, but the gods would still give them what they asked for, but he suddenly realized that this was not so and fell silent.

Zabiba smiled and said to herself:

- You bring gifts, but they give you nothing. They take it, but don't return it. And she said to the king:
- So, your gods give to you only when you bring them gifts. And they don't give it to everyone equally, but depending on the capabilities of each and depending on what he offers to his god, a gift or a sacrifice? This means that the value of your gods depends on your position, that is, on what each of you has. It turns out that they differ depending on the position of the donor and the value of the gifts and sacrifices made. Since unequal gifts and sacrifices are made to the gods, you are not all equal before your gods, and the gods themselves are not equal to each other.

- Yes it is.
Zabiba said:
- It turns out that your gifts are material, but reward for them is still in question. The king said:
- Repeat the last phrase.
- I say that your offerings to the gods are material, and the reward for offerings is doubt, my king.
- Yes, this is what happens with our gods.
- Do you promise me mercy, great king?
- You are my beloved and the beat of my heart. You know how I treat you. You

There will always be my protection, Zabiba.

- I want to say, my king, but not to hurt you, but out of respect for you and for the abilities of your mind, which, if it were to escape from the shackles and throw off the weight under which it languishes, occupied with gods, questions of power and conspiracies, would do the people great service. And I am ready to serve you, and then my people.

The king interrupted her words, saying the following:

- Don't tell me that my mind can serve the people, but tell me that I can to benefit my subjects, for I am the master of the people, and not their servant.
- Forgive me, my king. Of course, you are the master of your people, but you are also their servant.
- No, I'm not a servant, Zabiba.
- I ask for your forgiveness and appeal to your patience, my king. I do not mean, that he who serves the people serves each of its representatives, as do those who serve for pay or reward. I mean that you, being the leader of the people, on the basis of strict principles, defend their interests, protect the borders of our kingdom, increase the wealth of the nation, preserve its high ideals, and bring everything lofty and useful into the life of the people. You stand up for the people who have given power over themselves into your hands, and serve their principles. This is the correct understanding of serving the people.

The king said:

- Does the presence of a foreign force on the land of the state contradict the high ideals? Don't you see that many kings around us called foreigners to them, and they remain in their lands to this day? Do you think this casts a shadow on them and their states?

- Yes, my great king. Truly, the presence of foreigners in the country, unauthorized or by invitation, their influence on the worldview and traditions of the people, on the free will of their king, contradicts the concept of a free country, and the sons of this country are not free in it.

- The kings say that it's better this way.

- Which is better, my king?

- They say that it is better when foreigners remain on the land of states and when the powers of their rulers are limited so that they are not so free as to conflict with the aspirations and plans of foreigners.

- Why is this better, my king?

- So that rulers do not have to serve the people if their state is completely freed from foreigners.

"But in that case they serve foreigners, my lord."

- Maybe. But one day, as they say, the strangers will leave with their armies to where they came from. They will leave, and then the rulers will become free and not burdened by ties with the people. They will become free instead of being servants of the people. Nor will they serve foreigners who will be far away. Isn't this logical, Zabiba?

- No, my king, everything is not as simple as you say. Even if for the sake continue the conversation and agree with some of your arguments.

- How is it, Zabiba?

- There will always be someone who thinks that his wishes will be easily fulfilled if he serves service to foreigners, but in this case he will become not only a servant, but also a prisoner. Moreover, a humiliated captive who surrendered to the enemy of his nation without fighting, without breaking, as expected, a spear, a sword, or a bow. He will be a servant without pay, like the one who serves in houses and shops, or something like that. He will begin to do work in which there will not be even a small part of a legitimate profession. There is a huge difference between a king and an ordinary person. When an ordinary person is hired on a contract, he has the opportunity to terminate the contract or renegotiate it if no decent work is available for him. But the king, being in the service of foreigners, cannot afford this. The people will be against the king when they finally lose confidence in him, and if the king thinks and acts in this way, the people will never rally around him and will never forgive him. For a novice ruler who strives to make the people powerful, defends their interests and independence, even if he makes mistakes, the people will allow him to start over and correct these mistakes. But the people will not forgive the one who betrayed him. The people will forgive everything to those who accept the will of the people and do not resist it, who are ready to make great sacrifices, sacrificing even the crown. And the people will not forgive the one who accepted the conditions of foreigners, thereby humiliating the dignity of his people and forgetting what the power of the state is, and will plot against him. Then the king or ruler will experience loneliness in its full sense, and the one who experiences loneliness understands what alienation is and trembles with fear. Your position will be no better, my king, if you become like those kings around us. You will find yourself in the stranger's fist and become obedient to the movements of his fingers. You will serve him in whatever he demands, whether you like it or not. You will lose the sweetness of the feeling that you are a servant of the people and their master, or, if you want, their master and servant, and, being under the influence of a foreigner and under his power, you will never again become a master. You will become a despised servant, and not a servant who does good things. So isn't it better to be a servant of the people and their master than a despised servant of foreigners?

- Yes, but it's better to be the master of the people and their servant, Zabiba.

Zabiba stood up, hugged the king with both arms and, without asking his permission, kissed him on the forehead. It is so customary among kings that a commoner, before kissing the king, must ask his consent, and he has the right to allow or refuse. But if the king

wants to kiss any woman from the people, he does not need to ask anyone for permission.

* * *

The king said:

- I want to go back in time again and say that in those days when I visited you in a village house located next to the house of the despicable Hiskil, and when you came to me in the palace, your speeches showed the experience of a common man and deep knowledge of issues of power. Tell me where and how you could find out all this.

- My answer is so important for you, my king, that I have no choice but to answer? The king was surprised that Zabiba hesitated to answer, and he even more wanted to know that secret, because of which Zabiba was in no hurry to answer his question. He said:

- Isn't clarity and equality what any relationship is based on? Zabiba answered:

- You are right, my king.

"Isn't it necessary for there to be equality between lovers, Zabiba?" Having said this, the king borrowed what Zabiba herself had once said, as if he wanted to remind her of what was said and thereby make it easier to answer his question.

Zabiba said:

- Yes, my king, I already told you about this before.

- So do you wish for yourself what you would not wish for others?

- God forbid I should do this, my king, it would be selfish, and no one would trust me after this.

- Then answer my question.

- Your will, my lord.

It was clear that she would prefer not to answer, but he did not excuse her from answering.

- I talked and told you about what has to do with the people, about the prerequisites and feelings, about the way of thinking, about accepting what can be accepted, and about rejecting what he rejects.

And, speaking about rejecting what the people reject, she added:

- But I cannot express the point of view of the entire people in this. I speak only on behalf of the bulk of it.

- Why can't you express the position of the whole people? Didn't I guarantee do you want equality in our conversation?

- Guaranteed, my king, but I didn't give you this difficult answer until you prepared to bear its weight. So that it's not hard for you to listen to what people don't accept.

- So you did this at your own discretion, and not because I didn't allow it?

- Yes, my king, at your discretion. It's because I feel good about you.

- How is it, Zabiba?

- Life has taught me, as it has taught other people from the people, to accept what I do not want it if another has the right to force it on me. This is how I am accustomed, and this is how other people are accustomed from the very beginning of life. But you are not used to this, because you make decisions in your life, and others carry them out. Everything is arranged in such a way that the people or those around you cannot resist your decision, and you will not give up your decision, even if it does not enjoy the support of the people and the people would not accept it if they had the opportunity to challenge it. Therefore, you need a relationship on a completely different level. You should understand what responsibility is. Therefore, I tried for the time being not to tell you about this, and I, with your permission, represent the conscience of the people here. I know everything that the people do not accept and reject. But according to my plan, I will tell you everything sooner or later.

- But shouldn't I, Zabiba, in order to make a final decision, have complete clarity in everything or at least in basic concepts? Shouldn't I know everything about the people, how

people know everything about me in order to accept him as he is, but he accepted me as I am?

- Yes, my king, but everything has its time, and the depth begins from the shore. People don't always are ready, and not everyone can immediately plunge into the depths and resist the rapid flow. Therefore, at first they swim near the shore. And no one can dive into the deepest place if he has not swum to it, if he has not yet matured internally and practically.

- That's right, Zabiba. So, you will tell everything later and explain everything that concerns life of the people?

- Yes, my king, both pleasant and sad.

- Is there really something sad in the life of the people, as there is in the royal corridors? palaces and royal chambers?

- Yes, my great king, both yes and no.

- How is this, Zabiba?

- There is sadness in his life. But sadness is not at all the same as in the corridors royal palaces. The sad thing is that people have unseemly desires, behavior that can hardly be called decent, and greed.

- Are the people as greedy as the kings?

- The people are not greedy, my king, but there are greedy people among the people. Each of them is greedy in my own way.

- What next?

- Truth and untruth are mixed up among the people, and they will not be able to distinguish them unless wishes it.

- To listen to you, Zabiba, it turns out that I have the same position as the one who asks the fire for protection from the heat.

- Not quite so, my king. Conspiracies, disagreements, intrigues and the like that what happens in the palaces of kings or in their attitude towards the people and their problems are not due to lack of clarity or lack of consciousness, culture or necessary preparation. Other things have settled in the souls, and therefore the disease progresses. But the one who can recognize in the people those bad qualities that we just mentioned will be able to eliminate them and heal the people, using consciousness, clarity, preparation, depth of faith, the adoption of fair laws and their decisive implementation.

- Do people really need determination, Zabiba?

- Yes, my great king, people now need determination so that good people found protection in her and that those who are weak in soul feared her.

- I understood you. But let's get back to what I asked you about. How could you go so deep to know the issues of power and kingship, you, who you are and who I have known you from the moment we met?

- I don't agree with you, my king, because you don't know me well.

- Is this possible, Zabiba?

"Women are like that, they don't put all their qualities on display." So a woman's character is structured, and this is how she behaves in life and with a man. And since you did not ask me this question before, I did not want to reveal to you what I will tell you now, answering your question, but for this I will also ask you something.

- Tell me, Zabiba, what you want.

- Let's rest so I can breathe in your scent and kiss you. The king smiled and said:

- I swear by Allah, I wanted to ask the same from you, my beloved Zabiba. But people ahead of kings because he is closer to life. Is this not what you wanted to tell me, Zabiba?

"I would have said it, my king, if you hadn't said it yourself."

They enjoyed their rest and returned to conversation. The king said:

- I'm ready to listen to you, Zabiba.

- And I am ready and internally determined to serve my king. The king said:

- I'm listening to you, Zabiba.

Zabiba continued to speak as if she had returned from a dream world or woke up from a dream:

- Yes, yes, my king, I'm ready. And

she said, a little embarrassed:

"Our house stood, as you know, very close, almost right next to Khiskil's house, and he at first he wanted to demolish it, because its appearance was incompatible with the appearance of his luxurious palace. The house was made of clay, covered with wood and reeds, and again covered with clay on top. The house was built in a simple way and from materials that were inexpensive, but the father wanted to make it cozy inside. He used plaster, which was left over from the construction of the palace, and covered the walls of the house inside with it, and adapted old windows that the workers of Hiskil had thrown into a landfill after demolishing the old house that stood nearby, so that sunlight would fall into our house. We lived in this house, me and my father, until I got married and we all began to live together.

Zabiba fell silent and thought to herself:

- Is it worth telling the king everything about my relationship with my husband and about my feelings in connections with them?

Then she said to herself:

"Wise people say it's true that a woman who complains about her relationship with husband to a stranger, calls him to himself or gives a sign about it. No, I won't tell him everything.

Then she looked into her soul again and asked her:

- But doesn't the king have power over all our affairs and we can't tell him everything we want when we complain about what doesn't give us peace? How will he help me if he is not convinced that I am right? How will he be convinced that I'm right if he doesn't know the whole truth?

And she continued out loud:

- My husband treated me as if he had bought me for his sexual needs: as if he is a ram among a flock of sheep, and I am one of the sheep. He pushed me into bed without bothering to prepare me. He never asked my wishes and put my father in a difficult position, who often had to sleep in the yard due to a feeling of awkwardness. My father only entered the house when necessary or when he saw that my husband was gone. Imagine, my great king, how he asked me, in order to chalk up another victory: "How many times have we done this today, Zabiba? How much is left before our usual norm?" This is how he asked me and treated me this way, without even trying to find out whether I wanted it or not. He did not try to express his human feelings towards the one he loved, and looked at what he was doing as if it were all just for him. And when I asked him sometimes, he said that he wanted to show me how much he loved me through the times he counted in bed, and that this was the only way he was able to express his affection for me. Perhaps the thought was spinning in his head to say that this is how I pay off my father's debt for the bride price that he took for me.

-Have you had a child?

- No.

The king smiled, and she guessed what he wanted to say:

- How come you didn't have children if you were both young and did what you said? did you tell me now?

Zabiba said:

- At the beginning of our life together, I became pregnant with a girl, but I miscarried her after the way he kicked me in the stomach while dragging me into bed. He beat me often and cruelly. After

we no longer had children. And I thank Allah that this happened.

- How can you say that, Zabiba? Isn't having a child the mission of the living? In this life?

- This is true, but not everyone is given the ability to fulfill it.

- Yes, this is part of the mission of someone who is capable of this.

- That's right, my king, but in addition to ability, you also need desire.

- I agree, Zabiba, it's hard to imagine someone who is capable of this without having desires.

"In any case," said Zabiba, "my husband considered what he did to me in bed, but failed to awaken my insides and my soul so that I would carry again. He did this mechanically, like someone who does this to a woman against her will.

And a woman's desire must be respected, because sometimes it is necessary for a child, my king, to be born, and without it a woman may not be able to bear it.

- A woman's desire must be respected, because without it it is difficult to imagine this possible. Aren't women half of society? If they have a negative attitude towards the other half, the rudder of the ship of life will fail. What happens if they avoid their other half while continuing to influence her so much?

- So we came to the same opinion. Is it because they are capable of mutual understanding? and strive for it?

- Yes, Zabiba, now everything is exactly like this. We have a mutual desire and mutual abilities, and also the equality that each side feels, despite the fact that one of us is a king, and the other is a people. We both strive to agree with each other, not contradict.

And the king, smiling, added:

- Except in some cases.

- Yes, my great king, yes, the one to whom Zabiba will give her soul! You started talking almost just as soulfully as the people say.

- After all this, you say "almost"?

- Yes, my king, we have to take into account the residual influence of the state in which you remained until great changes took place in you. Isn't the title of a king different from that of a common man? That's why I say "almost". The king must not forget his title and bear the burden placed on him by the title. And the people should not forget this, remember their responsibilities to the authorities and bear their burden, and not worry about what they are not supposed to worry about.

So, Khiskil called everyone to his feast, which he arranged in his palace every day after sunset. And emirs and ministers, noble people, rich merchants and large pimps came to him. There were both women and men there.

- Do pimps have their own hierarchy, like in the government or in the royal family?

- Yes, my king, everyone has their own position depending on their influence in that the field in which he specializes. There are large, small and medium pimps.

- And they were present there on equal terms with noble people?

- Yes, my king, almost on an equal footing.

- You said "almost" again.

- Yes, my lord, because the one who builds a relationship with a person not through his convictions, and through a pimp, he himself is no better than a pimp, and of the same dignity. But it is natural that he is treated almost as an equal, because if the pimp is not willing, his client will not get what he wants.

- You put a person in the position of a thing, Zabiba, when you said "that" about him.

- Yes my Lord. And all because the one who offers himself and his abilities thus ceases to be human.

And she continued:

- They danced there and drank wine, and everyone did what they wanted without asking

permission, unless, of course, the matter concerned that side of the relationship that required the presence of desire or at least the absence of reluctance. Imagine, my king, how sometimes on moonlit nights they played a game called "tearing to pieces in the forest." The essence of the game was that they left the palace into the surrounding garden and courtyard, after which the men tried to take possession of the women indiscriminately. Any woman could be "torn to pieces" by any man, and there was no agreement between them in advance. A woman could defend herself from a man only with her bare hands, and the man tried to master her until he took her by force. Or they pretended to be. Then everyone returned to the palace to tell what curious things everyone had in this game - being torn to pieces. And the damned Khiskil was the inventor and implementer of all these innovations.

- What about you, Zabiba? - asked the king.

- What do you think, my king? - Zabiba asked.

- I think only good things about you. You are a proud and exalted man, Zabiba, but you was among those whom she spoke about.

- Yes, my king, the environment attracts those who are unable to resist its vices, but cannot cope with strong people who draw strength from within themselves. I was the way you imagine me, the Zabiba you would like to see, the daughter of the people and their conscience. I left there as soon as they started their vile games, but I watched them from the side. Some women refused to participate in this, but their husbands then divorced them, fearing that they would be overtaken by the contempt of Khiskil or his assistants. And if someone refused to throw out their wives, Khiskil and his company fought with him until he obeyed. And everyone obeyed, except one of them, and that was my husband. I don't know how or why he was allowed to participate in these games, although he did not take me with him and did not dare to offer it to me.

I had one friend who was a server, and I really wanted to see the lives of those people to find out what they were thinking about and what they were like. I already knew my life; all I had to do was find out about the lives of others. My friend and I agreed that I, like her, would dress in the dress of a server who serves the guests of Khiskil in the palace, and would do everything necessary - bring jugs of wine and goblets, pour wine into a goblet at the request of the guests and serve it. They treated me kindly there, and sometimes even invited me to play their gambling games with them.

Zabiba felt that the king was surprised, thinking that she was playing their games with them, and said:

- No, my king, principles do not allow duality. I used to sit with them, but my principles did not suffer from this. I did not play their games with them, and at most I allowed one of them, who was already dizzy from wine, to give me wine to drink.

The king said:

- Did they sit you next to them, Zabiba?

- Yes, my king, and sometimes they tried to woo me, but to no avail.

She said this as if she wanted to show off to the king, and added:

- You should have seen them! Emirs, ministers and merchants bowed down to kiss my feet, the feet of Zabiba, the daughter of the people, hoping that I would satisfy their desires, but I arrogantly refused them.

This is what Zabiba said, but she forgot that the one she was speaking to was the king.

- But is it that they invited you to sit next to them and tried to get your favor, does not mean that in their relationship with you they forgot about their ranks and titles?

- No, my king, they wanted to take possession of the people in me, after they could not do this before.

- Are you sure everything was exactly as you say?

- There is a difference, my lord, between someone who first erases in his soul and consciousness all social boundaries and differences, and then treats people as his mind and

conscience, and those who act selectively, obeying the dictates of the soul that arose at a certain time. Therefore, my king, you, like the people, must understand that the whole difference is in attitude. If someone initially treats the people favorably, his attitude will not be affected by any conditions, events or whims. And if his attitude is insincere, the substitution will immediately be revealed. True unity with the people is manifested in will and faith. If it is only depicted, it is revealed very quickly, since in the first case the unity continues continuously, and in the second it appears from time to time and is only a tactical move, and not a manifestation of human aspiration and desire. Therefore, all their fawning on me did not mean at all that they abandoned their way of thinking and ideals for my sake. All this was done just to master me.

- What did you do, Zabiba?

- I was like someone who walks across a plowed field on a moonless night, and his path is illuminated by only his heart.

- Good girl, Zabiba! Truly the light within us is the true light that will not allow

neither the eye, nor the soul, nor the heart can make a mistake.

- Yes, my king, the one to whom I sacrificed my soul. Speak so that they can hear you people all over the world. Speak like people of the people, so that you become close to us and so that you do not differ from us in any way, except for what your position obliges you to do in our name.

- Great, Zabiba! If you hadn't said "in" before the word "position" this time name of us," I would definitely be angry with you.

- How can I bear the wrath of my beloved and my master? And they both laughed.

* * *

The chief steward of the palace came to them and informed the king that several emirs were looking for a meeting with him.

The king asked:

- Who are they?

The chief steward began to list their names.

The king listened to the entire list. Then he ordered him to leave and said that he would call him when the time came.

The chief manager left. And the king did the right thing.

Although there was nothing that would cause him to doubt the intentions of the emirs, the king later learned that their meeting with him was part of a conspiracy they had formed against him and Zabiba. Among the demands they put forward was that the king should not allow Zabiba to come to the palace (her visits had already become almost daily, and she herself became the king's constant adviser, especially when it came to the people and their problems).

Zabiba continued her story:

- I saw how large traders plot against small and medium-sized ones, like one groups pit against each other, how each merchant competes with the other and how they try to outdo each other in trade gains and villainy. And like merchants and pimps, the emirs compete with each other for the king. For you, my great king. And when it comes to who will become the crown prince in our kingdom, they disagree with each other and weave plots against each other. It pained me to see how two emirs lost in gambling and one, in order to continue the game, sold, on the advice of Khiskil, to a merchant who came from the country of Elam his sword, and the other his armor. And many did so. They sold their weapons and horses to a merchant from Elam or to Hiskil himself, or to someone who came there from afar, and I wanted to ask where they would get weapons from if they suddenly had to fight. But in my soul the answer was already ready: "He who can buy their weapons and equipment for losing in the game can buy them themselves for the help that he will provide them in carrying out the conspiracy that he will arrange with them. He will lend them weapon to kill you, and then take it back."

- And every player does this?

- Yes, my king, they are capable of selling even their own wives. What they are already doing to some extent when they are allowed to be where men gamble and drink wine.

- How is this so, Zabiba?

- If a husband allows his wife to be present where gambling is taking place and wine is being drunk, This means that he is internally prepared not to be jealous of his wife for the looks of other men, or even for their vulgar whispers and smiles. Shouldn't a man protect his wife from the attacks of other men and guard her behavior? Alas, all the emirs, traders and noble people who came there by invitation did this. And Khiskil inspired the one who hesitated that he had no place among them, and put pressure on him, including instilling in him that he was backward, limited and not worthy of rising to their level if he did not do what he was asked to do want. This is bad, but what is even worse is that we look at this evil differently. Do you know, my king, that they took blue-eyed people who came from afar to their sanctuaries, and yet did not allow those who had much greater rights to enter there? Is there anything sacred for them after this? Is there anything bright left in their concepts after what they did? Is there at least something preserved in them of the morality that connects them with our people and with all the peoples that are around us? Is there anything left in them, if there ever was one, of a person who, even with a minimum of positive qualities, is able to build bridges on which meetings would take place in order to go towards a goal together?

Zabiba even burst into tears because of how despicable the situation of those she was talking about was. But she continued speaking after she wiped away her tears, and the king helped her come to her senses.

- Once among them, I learned everything I needed, my king. I learned that which does not correspond to their morals, behavior and thinking, because I rejected their thinking and behavior consciously and prudently, when my soul shuddered from what was revealed to my gaze. I understood where we should stand when my conscience, imbued with deep faith and the glorious role of the people, told me what the interests and aspirations of the people were.

- What a great fellow you are, Zabiba! - said the king. But before he reminded her that according to them As usual, the time has come for them to part, Zabiba said:

- And now that you know everything, wouldn't it be difficult for you, my lord, to fulfill my request?

- Command, Zabiba.

- Forgive me, my king. Thank you for your favor and condescension.

- You spoke as if you were meeting me for the first time!

- No, my king, this is a request from a subject to his king, and in this case, tact and respect is entirely appropriate. Isn't one of the elements of a person's influence that he adheres to the rules of decency, always remembers them and does not forget about the requirements of elementary politeness?

- That's right, Zabiba. And the one to whom we turn will be more willing to listen to us and help if we, when communicating and talking with people, comply with the standards of decency and behavior. Say what you want to say, Zabiba.

- Tell me, after you've listened to my story to the end, and I even told you about my husband, don't I have the right to demand a divorce from my husband?

- What can stop you if you decide to do this, Zabiba?

- Nothing bothers me except my weakness.

-Are you weak, Zabiba?

- Yes, my king, even a hero is weak before the right.

- What is law and what is its opposite?

- My husband paid my father a bride price for me, and my father needed what he gave him. gave to cope with his predicament. And although my husband was mine

cousin, he did not take into account kinship by blood and wanted to marry me, taking advantage of my father's need for money, which my future husband, after he wormed his way into Khiskil's company, turned out to have plenty of. I don't even know where and when they got together. My father invited me to marry him and gave me freedom of choice, because before I rejected him every time he asked me to become his wife. I told him that I would agree if he left the Khiskil company and moved away from their customs and habits. When my father last asked me to marry him, I agreed on the condition that I would stay in the house where you visited us, and he would live in this house with us or come there from time to time. By that time, my future husband had already adopted all the customs of his masters and playmates and married several times, and he, like his friends, had concubines. I agreed to marry him on these terms, and he accepted them too. And what happened next cannot be called marriage, except perhaps buying and selling. And what was even more terrible was that my husband treated me as if, by buying me, he wanted to trample on my honor. He wanted to crush me, but I resisted with all my might. Because principles, if they have settled in the soul, give a person perseverance, patience and the ability to resist. I fought with him until I recognized you.

And although the oppression that I suffered from my husband, who constantly beat and humiliated me, for reasons understandable to you, ceased after you began to come to our house, I still remained sold to him, and I cannot free my neck from his noose until I will not be freed from the amount he paid for me.

- This will help you, Zabiba, when you make your final decision regarding your husband?

- Yes, my king, and that's the main thing. I agreed to this wedding so as not to be a burden to his father, who by that time could no longer feed us. I wasn't happy even for a second with my husband. But our separation must occur not only according to my desire, but also according to the law.

The king said, smiling:

- Whatever you want.

Then she rushed to him and hugged him by the shoulders. She kissed his head and forehead, kissed his hands, and when she wanted to kiss his feet, he lifted her up, not allowing her to do so. Their bodies were so close that they were almost touching, and he kissed her forehead.

Zabiba began to cry, and her tears dripped onto the king's cheek and onto his clothes. Then she wiped her tears and said:

- Allah sent you to me and your people. You are rightfully the king of our great states.

* * *

When the time came to leave, Zabiba asked the king for permission to go home, but the king did not allow her to leave. Then she started talking about other topics than what they had talked about before.

The king asked Zabiba:

- How can you describe your love for me, Zabiba?

- When I say that I love you, my king, this phrase, before leaving my language, passes through all of me. I say it like everyone else, but the origin of the words and their source are not the same as everyone else. Perhaps even the direction of the letters that make up the phrase "I love you" is different. And if you want more, my king, then I will tell you that when a person feels that things around him, including nature, are transformed by light, this light comes from none other than the rays of his love, without which, like without the sun, one cannot live impossible. This means that he truly loves. That is why I felt that I was not mistaken in my love, my king, although I do not honor your ancient god. I fell in love with you in my soul, my king, when the relationship between us began to paint the life around us with a variety of colors. And after that, shouldn't it come to the fore?

soul? Shouldn't it rise to heights, if that is what it is - an exalted state? And what is a person without a soul if not a bag of bones? Is it possible to lock up a soul or limit its flight by space or some principle? Is it not Allah alone who is free to determine where the soul will find refuge?

- Yes, Zabiba, you are right again. That love that settles only in the heart, and not in the soul, falls under the influence of the objects of this world. And the one who falls under the influence of objects himself begins to consist of objects. Objects have the value of objects for him in accordance with the degree of influence of each of them. Such a person examines his beloved in parts. He separates her eyes from her, separates her nose, breasts... he separates her body from her and loves only the body. But if he loved a person as a whole - with his soul and body, with character, qualities and behavior, then love would take on a different scope and cover all these aspects, and would not remain attached to objects, including parts of the body, causing this love. If love takes on the shape and color of objects, then this love can be influenced. It can be weakened by difficulties and obstacles standing in its way, it can change direction under the influence of obstacles, but all this cannot have a pernicious effect on the soul. Therefore, for other reasons, a person needs a distant god, who cannot be touched or seen, who would not be part of the earth or what is in this world. That's why I loved you, Zabiba. I saw in you a sanctuary and a symbol of my soul. You are her healer and medicine.

Zabiba asked:

- But why? Why did you love me, my great king?

- I loved you, Zabiba, so that in you and through you I could love my people. I understood you, when I listened to what you said. I understood you when I saw how you acted. I realized that you are capable of sacrificing yourself and that you have everything you talk about. I understood your God, because you are a living part of the people, and you believe in their role and love your homeland. Through love for you, I loved your people, and after that I loved your God. I loved, Zabiba, your people, and therefore I loved your God. Or maybe it was your God who gave me love for you and the people after I fell in love with them.

I realized that there is no contradiction between the ruler's love for the people and his love for God. I realized that anyone who does not love the people cannot love the only God, such as your Lord, Zabiba. I also understood the obvious contradiction between our gods and our love for the people, because our gods fulfilled our desires in accordance with our position or destiny, but with the desires of the people everything was always different. Therefore, after I fell in love with you and loved your people, I decided to accept your faith and abandon my god. I decided to destroy it in order to finally find harmony with myself, after loving you with all my soul. I love you and your people with all my soul and I will give my soul for you. With all my soul I strive for your God and pray to him for forgiveness and favor.

When the king said the last phrase, tears flowed from his eyes and flowed down his cheeks and mustache. Zabiba jumped up and, bursting into tears, hugged him, kissed him on the forehead and said:

- We praise Allah for creation, for giving us birth and showing us the way, for He prepared for us, for what he glorified and made us happy. We ask him, praise be to him, for mercy during his judgment. I believe in you, O God, Lord of two worlds.

The king said:

- I believe.

After a moment he turned to Zabiba and said to her with some embarrassment:

- Since you love me this way and since I love you the way I imagine you, will you agree for me to become your husband according to the law of your God, Zabiba?

It was so sudden that Zabiba's tongue went numb for a moment and happiness overwhelmed her and played on her cheeks and lips. But she controlled herself and said to the king:

- It is not in my rules to resist the request of my king, but may the lord allow me

my share my opinion with him if he wants to hear it.

The king was surprised and amazed that Zabiba did not want to take advantage of the chance given to her. To hide the embarrassment in which he was, and remembering the character of Zabiba, the king spoke to himself:

- Truly, Zabiba is not like everyone else. She has her own opinion on everything. And since I've taught myself to respect her opinion, or at least listen to it with respect and benevolence and appreciate it, I must listen to her now.

The king spoke, smiling and showing some embarrassment, which could be easily noticed in him, just as anger could be easily noticed. Don't kings get angry when someone opposes their will and hinders their plans?

- I am ready to listen to your opinion, Zabiba. And Zabiba began to look for answers within herself:

- Where will the kings of our time get their imagination and where will their plans come from? Doesn't everything that happens now come from abroad? What else can they do but do everything obediently? Doesn't a guard dog have space where it can run and bark? The space in which she receives freedom of movement depends on the nature of the place that she is entrusted with protecting. When her owner wants to take charge of her kingdom, he will give the dog a meter-by-meter space or put him on a meter-long leash. And if he wants to act treacherously against her fellow tribesmen and neighbors, he will lengthen the rope, and convince the one with whom he wants to do this that it is tied. By this space I mean the following: such a person is not the master of his desires. I know that our king is not like everyone else, and yet at the very basis of his mental structure he has something in common with them.

Zabiba finished thinking and said:

- I fell in love with you, my king, because I was attracted by the qualities of your personality, although I myself am generally against kings and against the order by which a king becomes a king, especially against inheritance, which occurs regardless of the suitability of the heir or lack thereof, the ability or inability to rule, his qualities and the opinion of the people. My dislike for this increased when I saw with my own eyes how gatherings and holidays were held at Khiskil, made possible thanks to such power and such kings. In your personality I saw the foundation thanks to which you will be able to take on your shoulders the care of the people when you want to do this, O my king. And when and how you want it, this is my task, and I promised Allah to fulfill it. While I was doing it, I fell in love with you for everything I found in you. It will be natural if I say that our connection with you exceeds all my dreams and paints them with such bright colors, the existence of which I would not have known if not for our connection with you. But the whole point is that now our wedding can spoil the people's opinion of me, and they will think that all my struggle and all my patience, all the enormous difficulties that stood in my way that I overcame, all this was solely for the sake of to achieve a wedding with you, my king, and not for the sake of our people. Besides, you are still the king, and I don't think that our people, frightened by the kings of those who humiliated themselves before foreigners, will trust the king. But in the history of our people there were kings like precious sparkling pearls in the crown. But where are the kings of our time, worthy of the kings of bygone times?

Then Zabiba remembered that the one to whom she was telling all this was also a king. Then she said she:

- Forgive me, my lord, I swear by Allah, I do not put you on a par with those to whom are my arrows intended? I say all this as if you are almost the same as me.

- Are you saying "almost" again, Zabiba?

- Yes, my king, because you still remain a king, and my name is still the same

Zabiba. And Zabiba is the daughter of the people and their conscience.

- But when we get married, you will become a queen, and then our qualities, united,

form equality.

- No, my lord, equality will not work, because even as queen I

I will be in a position under your control, which means I will not be independent and will not be able to behave as my independence would ideally allow. In this case, I will lose my freedom, turning from the daughter of the people who gained freedom (including the fact that her king allowed her to speak out and gave her equality in conversation with him), from the state of struggle in which the daughter of the people finds herself, being the living conscience of this of the people, just as a queen, as an ordinary addition to the king, shackled by her title and other heavy fetters.

- What you say, Zabiba, is partly true, especially as it concerns the queen. But after all, you will receive such privileges, including fame, which you do not have now.

- Yes, my king, I will receive privileges and however I will lose freedom, and with it those privileges that are currently available to me.

- What privileges, Zabiba?

- Partly glory, my king, partly influence and a special role.

- How is it, Zabiba?

- My glory comes from the importance of my role and from my name, which he appropriated people to me: Zabiba, daughter of the people and their living conscience. My role is to represent the people before the king, to be their conscience in conversation with him, to be their experience and reason in my advice to the king. And at the same time I am free, because I can come to the king at will or not come to him.

The king said:

- You can renounce the title of queen and leave the king at any time if

whatever you wish.

- No, my king, I cannot agree to this, because when I get used to the royal throne and to the royal crown, to the way people address me, to the way the guards, maids and court ladies treat me, when I am in the rays of light emanating from the king, when I change from the inside, there will be nothing left for the outside as submit. As for the fact that I can leave the king and return back to the people, then I will tell you that you will change, my king, when I become your wife, and, fearing for your reputation, you will not give me such freedom. It is the kings who can refuse people, and when people refuse kings, the kings cover them with the dirtiest curses instead of reproaching themselves for what happened. I can't do this for other reasons, which I'm keeping to myself for now and will reveal them to you another time. I ask you, my great king, accept my excuses and apologies. Oh, if only my master would agree to delay his proposal so that I could think about everything and decide. And choose the right time for this, when people know you well enough.

"I understand that you are resisting form, not essence, Zabiba." You resist quality of a king, but not a human king. Is form really that important, Zabiba?

- Yes, my king, the form is important to the extent that the owner adheres to it. A since you hold on to this form, its meaning and influence on your personality and your soul is equal to the tenacity with which you hold on to it. Besides, doesn't form have the strongest influence on essence? Form is what sometimes outlines for a person the direction of movement and line of behavior. Let's take clothes, for example. Tell me, does anything change in your behavior and in your gait when you put on royal clothes, put a crown on your head and sit on a throne, or when you put on simple clothes and go to your wife, or when you put on the clothes of a warrior and put on military equipment? But even if there is a noticeable difference in this, then what can we say about the influence of form on qualities and powers, on the order of succession from king to king, and much more?

* * *

Zabiba agreed with the king that she would part with her husband on good terms, fulfilling her desire to end the duality that haunted her when

she rushed between the royal palace and the house, where her husband, with his own desires or independently of them, but simply for the sake of form, tried to strengthen his position in her eyes. Perhaps he sought to show that he was achieving victory over her when he subjugated her to his will, when he scolded her, forced her into bed, or beat her for the most insignificant reasons. But she became the king's beloved, and people talked about her far beyond the boundaries of the royal palace. Isn't it human psychology to be like celebrities or to oppose them in everything? People seek to connect with those who are similar to them in terms of features or qualities, lifestyle or behavior, the way they wear and dress, including hairstyle and beard, length and width of mustaches, and the nature of their smile and laughter. People want to buy the same horses as the celebrity, the same staff, the same clothes, with the exception of the ukal*. This is because the ukal in our time has become the personification of shame and is put on the heads of some traitors to kings, emirs and their assistants. If Iraq had not saved it when the heart of the nation placed it on its head, the ukal would have become unpleasant to the Arab soul and the Iraqis would have said twice: "God forbid" when they met celebrities and noble people wearing it on their heads.

Isn't it common for people in many cases to become like celebrities, especially those who, in the absence of essence, find consolation in form, or to contradict them to the point of burning hatred for the reason that they themselves have empty souls?

The wise old woman spoke like this and laughed, as if she was expressing our feelings, and we seriously listened to everything she told about the king and Zabib, even if it was all fiction. We were looking forward to the continuation of this strange and fascinating tale, and the narrator wanted to focus our attention on her comments so that we would understand its essence and hidden meaning.

The old woman continued:

- Some desire the concubines of kings, their wives and daughters. Is there some desire sense, is it not the beginning of the desire to achieve something that is still far from possible? In this case, how does desire differ from aspiration?

Wanting to seriously drive away boredom from us, the old woman spoke to those of us who were already close to the age of a man:

- If you dream about them, at night you will dream that you have mastered one of them. And she said to another of the same age:

- And you, guy, I see, are already dreaming with might and main about one of the king's daughters! In response to her jokes, we all laughed, boys and girls, full of desire to listen again, gathered around her, to a fascinating tale.

Zabiba was returning on her piebald mare to her home after insisting that she would make this journey alone, unaccompanied. The king offered her an escort, but she insisted on her own - that no one should be with her. And the king ordered someone to accompany her, but, seeing her persistence, he realized that she would not agree to this. Fearing that this would confuse the king or that he would force her to accept the opposite, she said before he could convince her:

- It seems to me, my king, that you are in a hurry to show me as they look princesses with their retinues, undermining my authority and my influence among the people. One of my most important qualities that has influence among the people is that I have become close to the authorities and to those who make decisions, but at the same time I have remained part of the people, and not only in soul and mind, but also in my behavior and partly in appearance. I am from their environment, I am part of their life. Do you want to deprive me, my king, of influence? Have you hated me so much that you want to sink the ship I'm sailing on? Do you want to tame my freedom, my two wings that allow me to fly between the trees and enjoy the view of flowers and branches hanging over the river surface?

Zabiba told the king all this quite seriously, but at the same time flirtatiously, and a smile never left her lips. The king called this smile "bee nectar."

- What is bee nectar, grandmother?

- Yes, this is honey!

Many of us wiggled our tongues and licked our lips, suddenly craving honey. And the old woman continued:

And the journey from the city to her house was five farsakhs* or a little more. On both sides of the dirt road along which she walked, trees grew thickly and canals were dug. Many kings of bygone times built their palaces outside the cities (if they did not have to build a new city), protecting themselves from popular uprisings, because it was difficult for ordinary people to cover the distance on foot between cities, the usual centers of uprisings, and the royal palaces; and if they nevertheless rebelled, then the kings, emirs and their supporters tried to make sure that they died outside the city. Few of the people skillfully wielded the weapons and equipment that the kings, their guards, police and soldiers possessed. They often did not even have such simple things as horses, donkeys, camels, bows and arrows, swords and spears with which to confront those in the palaces. To do this you need to get together, and this requires a special organization. If the movement is not secret and organized, it will be discovered before it has acquired the power necessary for battle.

All this was spinning in Zabiba's head as she headed towards the house. She was lost in thought when she suddenly noticed some movement in the trees. She whipped up her horse to start galloping, but her path was blocked by a man on a horse surrounded by people whose faces were hidden by masks. Zabiba drew her sword and began to defend herself courageously, but one of the attackers struck her with a stick or an iron rod on the hand in which she was holding the sword, while the other two distracted her with their swords so that she would look away from the one who struck her. Her hand went numb and the sword fell out of her. Zabiba was pulled from the horse and her hands were tied behind her back. The main masked attacker led her to the edge of the forest, the rest walked slightly to the side. In the forest, without saying a word, he threw her to the ground, and she realized that he wanted to rape her. He covered her mouth with a rag so that no one would hear her cries for help. At first Zabiba resisted, but then she gave in, because the villain beat her with blows and kicks until she was bleeding, and she lost consciousness. And then he raped her, forgetting about masculinity and honor and not being afraid of the shame that would cover him for what he had done. Neither his children, nor his grandchildren, nor his grandchildren's grandchildren will get rid of this shame, and he himself will have no place among men. His offspring will not marry the daughters of noble people and will not marry their sons. After the incident, the criminal decided that she had lost consciousness, as she stopped resisting and lay motionless with her hands tied. The rag fell out of her mouth when she resisted, but he did not pay attention to it and leaned on her again. In a fit of excitement, resembling a wild animal, he brought his face close to her mouth, and then Zabiba grabbed his neck with her teeth and clenched her teeth with all her might, so that a deep wound remained on his neck.

Then the villain beat her worse than ever, and then untied her hands and left her lying there. Zabiba lay silent until she discovered that the night had already lowered its cover. Suddenly she noticed her horse: it, with its head down, stood over her and sniffed her legs, forehead, head and arms.

When Zabiba opened her eyes and saw the horse, she smiled at it, although she was overcome by unprecedented sadness and felt mortally humiliated by everything that had happened. She smiled at her mare, thanking her for her loyalty, even if it was only the loyalty of an animal to a person. And then she smiled bitterly at the fact that sometimes a person can be worse than an animal.

This is exactly what the villains did to Zabiba. They chose among themselves the one who would tear her honor apart, instead of tearing her flesh, as a fierce beast would have done. Doesn't a person's behavior depend on the level of development of his conscience, tempered in the process of education and training, and not just on his mind? And although a person differs from an animal primarily in his mind, the mind alone is not capable of making a person a full-fledged creature if his conscience is not human, because the mind is power, and power can accomplish

both good and evil deeds, unless, of course, good, which is learned through education, teaching and living example, does not lead the mind away from evil.

Based on all this, it can also be explained why one person can tear another to pieces, as they did with Zabiba.

- Even an animal respects a person's desire if it wants to copulate with him. Is not Does a bear please a man when she drags away a shepherd in the mountains of northern Iraq? She drags him into a cave so that, in obedience to her wishes, he copulates with her. Doesn't she bring him nuts, picking them from the trees or collecting them under them? Doesn't she sneak into peasants' houses at night to steal cheese, nuts and even raisins, feed him and make him want to take possession of her?

And this beast-man treated me like a human being, that is, he tore me to pieces in the most disgusting way. Perhaps this is one of those who sought me in vain when Khiskil failed to get me to participate in his nightly games.

This is what Zabiba said to herself.

"It would be better if he tore me to pieces with his fangs, tore open my stomach and killed me!" If he had done so, he would have been much more merciful than having acted as he did. What will I tell the Lord? Truly, the Lord is merciful and forgives everything, for he sees what and how a person does according to his own will, and what - contrary to it. If I were not afraid that He would torment me in His fire, I would have killed myself. But what will I tell the king? Will he believe my story? And if he does, will he believe that I resisted the violence as best I could? That I did everything I could do against the rapist. What will I tell myself? Woe is me, woe! I used to trust those with whom I communicated, but now I will no longer be the same as before.

"But why," Zabiba asked herself again, "why won't I be the same as before?" That, what happened did not happen according to my wishes. I resisted. I tried everything from the sword to prayer, I reminded the villain of masculinity and nobility, but all this did not help. I used my teeth. Isn't he a hero who fights even with his teeth before surrendering to an armed enemy?

Then she thought about the fact that she did not give up, but fell unconscious on the battlefield. And when she remembered how she fought, the pupils of her eyes widened to the limit, and she stopped thinking about it, as if she wanted to say to her:

- Here it is, yes, I found it, I will immediately reveal myself to the king. Isn't it better for a woman If she finds herself in an awkward situation with a man, immediately tell everything to her husband, brother or lover before he hears everything from others, and not allow him to think badly of her? Is it possible to mitigate the severity of the charge or avoid it if the whole truth is not revealed? If I confess everything to the king, we may find this mad dog and his criminal pack, because the king, if he wishes, can demand any person to come to him. We'll find the marks I left on his neck and body, and then we'll know everything else.

Then she thought:

- What if the king fails to find the criminal and those who were with him? Not Will it happen that I will tell him about something that he did not know and, perhaps, would not have known, and scare him away from me, because I will not have evidence of my innocence?

Then she told herself:

- What if he finds out? This means that the relationship between us will fall into the abyss and our plans will be in danger.

She decided that she would tell everything to the king immediately after she went home to change clothes and wash her body. It would be better for her to return to the palace later and give the king the opportunity to act on what she tells him, than for the guards to meet her as she is, and for the king to learn everything from the guards.

- I shackle his hands and deprive him of the opportunity to accept at his own discretion decision he deems necessary.

While all these thoughts were spinning in Zabiba's head, the horse walked along the road on its own, not needing to be directed - it was already accustomed to walking along this road back and forth. Noble horse! Isn't he noble who strictly adheres to his duty under difficult conditions and in difficult times? This is one of the most important differences between a noble person and an ignoble one.

The mare headed towards Zabiba's house, and the most precious thing a woman could have was forcibly taken away from Zabiba. There was nothing left for her to fear except her soul. It was unknown what could disturb her soul after everything that had happened, when suddenly Zabiba felt terrible loneliness, as if a cloud had covered her. Black and deep loneliness in her very soul. And she found the reasons for it in herself. Loneliness was revenge and fear for love. Before, everything happened with the king as they decided by mutual desire, and she got used to this idea.

"And now that such a change has happened, the king will face something different." I will stand in front of him, and he will know that I submitted to someone else's will, that I was raped. And the fact that I was raped, that I surrendered to the mercy of the villains, will be the reason that the king will no longer want me. The Tsar is accustomed to the fact that we argue with him on important issues, he knows how to extract wise thoughts even from what he calls my nit-picking, when I try to tactfully express my opinion on certain issues after he has expressed his. He is used to the fact that I try to ensure that my opinion does not coincide with his opinion, even if I see that his opinion is the wisest possible. I do this because I play the role of the conscience of the people, and the opinion of the people often does not coincide with the opinion of the king, and the conscience of the king and the people do not merge into a single whole. He got used to it and loved it in me, although his face is sometimes angry. He doesn't want to see me give up. If he sees that high feelings do not fight in me with defeatism, he will be surprised, he will not stand it and will get bored next to me.

- Revenge can be a cure for mental wounds. She, not knowledge of the truth and desire settle everything with minimal losses.

That's what Zabiba told herself.

And yet, a feeling of loneliness grew in her soul, as if a predatory beast was tormenting her insides, tearing out her veins, liver and even breasts. Didn't the predatory beast that violated her tear her breasts, as if he wanted to do this so that the king could see them like that? Their gang is not capable of disgracing the king, even if they wish to do so. Why don't they disgrace the king by humiliating his beloved? Take possession of her, destroy her from the inside, make her an outcast among people. The loss of a loved one by those who love him is another side of love. This must be what the villains were thinking about when they decided to do what they did, but how did they manage to find the one who was most evil of all? How did they know that this one would do what he did to her, even if she resisted? Perhaps this is a soldier who, for an unknown reason, fled from the battlefield, and then decided to take revenge on the one whom he considered his enemy, in order to cure this complex in himself. Or maybe a policeman, from whom a wanted criminal escaped due to his oversight. Or a merchant of women who sells them to noble people, but he himself cannot take possession of a single one, and therefore he hated women and, on behalf of all the sick and incapable, decided to commit this crime against the one who had become their symbol with the king.

Then Zabiba said:

- The soldier could not do this. Because he remembers that his main duty is to protect countries. And the one who puts his life into defending the country, so that his friends are proud of him and his enemies are indignant, cannot do what has been done. So is the policeman, although sometimes we think poorly of some of them because of the daily friction with them, when a contradiction arises between the one who considers his main business to be the implementation of the law, and the one who believes that the law is contrary to his personal freedom. The policeman could not do this because the criminal act committed against me is illegal, and the duty of the policeman is not only to respect the law, but also to ensure that it is

respected by others.

And suddenly she felt as if someone's claws had pierced her heart and drawn blood from it. But she could not explain this only by the state in which she was after the misfortune that happened.

Her husband thought that Zabiba would return to the palace to tell the king about what had happened, and did not even suspect that she would go home. And Zabiba tied her horse near the house and, since she was in such a humiliating state, approached the house silently. Her husband, half naked, washed away the blood that oozed from his neck and other parts of his body injured by Zabiba when she resisted and he raped her. Zabiba noticed all this through the slightly open door, through which she looked to see if anyone was in the house, because she absolutely did not want to talk to anyone.

Then she finally realized that it was her husband who raped her, that he was with a gang of scoundrels. New thoughts immediately appeared in her head, not the same as before. This conspiracy became clear to her, and she understood exactly why she, and not the king, became the target of the conspirators. Anyone who is unable to cope with the master will try to do this with his servant, concubine or slave.

- But what made this rotten (she meant her husband) commit this cowardly and a sneaky trick? If Khiskil, a gang of emirs and pimps and those traders who had completely lost their conscience, had their own goal, what made him do it? Don't those in power have the cruellest attitude towards virtue and human dignity?

He's a coward. That's for sure. But I couldn't imagine that he was also a scoundrel. Isn't a person judged by his actions? Was he trying to imitate the king? Or did he decide that if he cannot be a king, then he can become like a king if he takes possession of his beloved? Isn't there a difference, rottenness (it's about the husband), between winning favor and rape?

Then she thought to herself:

- Anyone who cannot come up with anything new to please his wife, doesn't he think that is it enough to rape her to satisfy her? This is no better than treating a wound from which pus is oozing, infecting it again and again. Get lost, you vile traitor!

She silently spat in his direction, then entered, feigning movement at the door so that he would not guess that she had seen everything. This would complicate the whole matter or force him to act differently from what she intended, and not when it was convenient for her.

- Doesn't changing tasks, means and deadlines require additional efforts and sacrifices? Doesn't a person sometimes lose the battle if he makes changes that were not necessary?

Thinking so, Zabiba opened the door and stepped into the house.

She gave her despised husband the opportunity to dress and tie the keffiyeh around his neck. He began to wrap his head, making the excuse that he had sprained his neck. And, deciding that Zabiba believed him, every time she approached him, he found some excuse so that she would not see his neck, and diligently avoided her. And Zabiba every now and then showed a desire to see what he had there, and did it in such a way that the patient began to suspect that she knew everything.

As for what happened to her, he asked her about everything as if he knew nothing, making a sad face, and she told him everything in detail, carefully watching his eyes to see his reaction. He began to behave as if the ifrit had grabbed him and wanted to throw him to the ground in order to break his bones and knock out the soul from him.

Zabiba liked torturing her husband like this, and she did it with pleasure. Isn't a woman's desire for revenge stronger than a man's? If she finds a way against the one she hates, she will force him to endure all sorts of torments and taste the most bitter defeats. Many men, especially those who have their own principles, do not specifically seek revenge, although it is one of the elements of their struggle, but when it comes to women, if their heart is bleeding or someone has gotten the better of them, their revenge appears

a well-defined goal that gives them pleasure. They would probably eat alive the one who caused them suffering if given the opportunity. Do you not know how Hind, the daughter of Ataba, chewed the liver of Hamza, may Allah be pleased with him, in revenge for the fact that he killed her father, brother and uncle in battle?

Zabiba's husband tried to hide the truth about what happened, and she asked him again and again how he injured his neck. Her husband, instead of getting angry, indignant and threatening to take revenge on the one who tormented her, resembled a dog who dared in his owner's house to devour food that was not intended for him, or bark at a guest, or mistakenly bite the owner himself, and the owner drove him away his. The tail of this dog dangled between his hind legs, and his whole appearance, gait and behavior spoke of the extreme degree of his humiliation.

And although we compared Zabiba's husband to a naughty dog, the dog, out of gratitude to its owner, will never betray him. Her husband acted treacherously towards her, so calling him a dog would not be enough. The skin of a dog can still be used if it is tanned and washed, but her husband's skin contained so much filth that it could not be touched without getting dirty, even if all the waters of the eternal Tigris River washed it.

Zabiba washed herself and put on clean clothes. She girded herself with a sword and rode out on her white horse. She hurried, noticing that the sun might rise before she reached the outer gates of the palace. There are usually many soldiers at the gate, and her appearance will give rise to questions and conversations that will not be contained within the walls of the palace. Rumors quickly spread among the palace servants, and from her everyone and other people learn. Isn't it enough for servants to eavesdrop and know everything that kings say, think and do? But don't the tongues of their concubines often become the mouthpiece of their fortune? Don't be late arriving at the palace gates. Dawn will help me hide the scratches on my face that I received in the fight with this mad dog.

Zabiba reached the palace and, as usual, proceeded to the king's private chambers. Without asking permission, she entered his bedchamber and saw that he was already waiting for her - the chief of the guard reported that she was heading to him as soon as he learned about it from the guards of the outer gate.

The king had not yet had time to get dressed, but had already risen from bed and washed his face, continuing his usual preparations for meeting her. A lot of thoughts and guesses were spinning in his head, and quite excited, he began to ask himself:

- Why am I so worried? They just said that it was her and not someone else, coming here, and must be in good health. I have nothing to worry about. Didn't she come on horseback? Anyone who covers the distance between his home and the palace on horseback should feel excellent. But why did she arrive at such an early hour?

However, the king gave her the right to come to the palace whenever she wanted, regardless of the time, and not as people come on official business or by invitation.

And when she said to the king:

- How can I come to the palace at a different time? - the king answered her:

- I have any time free for you, Zabiba, my beloved. And then she said:

"You shouldn't spoil me like that." After all, a simple person sometimes knows no boundaries of her sympathies and feelings.

And the king said to her, smiling:

"Didn't you tell me, Zabiba, that kings need more those who tell them truth than those who say: "Your will, my lord. Your will, my great king"?"

Isn't a friendly feeling and the joy of friendship what a king needs? Breaking out of the dilapidated concepts inherited from the old kings is the step that must be taken in order to seriously comprehend the life of people. If I begin to limit the one who is closest to me to a pre-arranged schedule, then our meetings will turn into a routine, and neither I nor she will have the opportunity to break it and act

not as if we were doing official work. If we act on the basis of the most ordinary human desire, from what the feelings of lovers dictate, then serious work for the good of the people will be more in line with their interests.

- But beware, my king. Forgive me, I don't mean the usual warning. The king laughed and said:

- So you have already begun to weigh your words, as if you were not the daughter of the people, but a princess from royal retinue.

Zabiba laughed and asked:

- Do kings and princesses really weigh everything down to the smallest detail?

- Not always. Not in the most significant moments, but only in what they took for communication style of kings. Doesn't someone whose soul is empty worry about excessive formalities? And weren't you the one who told me about this?

- Yes, all this is correct, my king. A person whose essence is filled with real things and whose day is busy with real affairs, will not adhere to formalities. He simply does not have time to waste on formalities that do not provide anything useful and are not an indicator of proper upbringing.

When Zabiba was heading from the outer gates of the palace to the king's private chambers, and the king was preparing to receive her, he was worried about the unknown, and all these thoughts were spinning in his head and some moments of their relationship were recalled.

Zabiba appeared at the door after knocking, and the king shouted to her:

- Come in!

And he fell silent at the sight of an unexpected sight. Zabiba's face and hands were all scratched. The king stepped towards her, but before he hugged her, she threw herself into his arms and began to sob.

The king silently hugged her and stroked her head, his fingers wandered through her hair, until Zabiba cried out the entire supply of tears that were languishing in her chest. This was their first meeting after the great grief that befell her. It was as if two misfortunes had happened to her, each of which caused severe pain. She could not decide what caused her more suffering: the fact that she was raped, or the fact that she was raped and beaten by her husband, who, among his other duties, was supposed to take care of her and protect her in every possible way.

Sometimes she thought that the violence and the suffering that she had to endure oppressed her less than the mental anguish due to the betrayal of her husband and the treachery of those from the criminal gang who betrayed the king. The violence might have been worse for her if it had not been for her to discover that she had been raped by her own husband. She told herself that the violence happened regardless of who committed it, and that her husband only played the role of the unknown. If she had not had a chance to find out the truth, then whoever did this to her would have remained unknown and she would have experienced only the pain of what she had done.

Violence causes great pain, regardless of whether a man rapes a woman, an army of invaders rapes the homeland, or the law is violated by those who do not accept it. But it's even worse when someone is given over to be mocked, be it a country or a person. Zabiba tried to ease the bitterness of violence and the pain tormenting her soul. She said to herself:

- But I resisted until I was weak from my wounds and until they left me strength and I became like a lifeless corpse.

Then she added:

- Yes, like a lifeless corpse. Can shame fall on a dead body? rape? Can the shame of rape fall on the history of the country and the people, when the people are dying and there is no one left on the land of the country who is capable of holding a weapon?

And she answered herself:

- Yes exactly. Any ruler who agrees with violence while he is alive and the people if he is not destroyed, he will be stained with shame, and his people, if they come to terms with this, will be covered in shame. Yes, desecration is unbearable for the soul and for history, for any free person. The tsar's betrayal is bitter, but the betrayal of the people, the country and its history echoes in the soul many times more bitterly and painfully.

Zabiba wiped away her tears. When she spoke in response to the king's questions about what had happened, she was choked with tears, not allowing her to speak. So she continued her story, punctuating it with tears every now and then, until she brought her sad story to the end.

At first the king flared up in anger, but then controlled himself, remaining, however, in the deepest sadness.

He repeated out loud:

"The plan of the attackers was very painful this time and struck me more strongly, than an arrow to the eye. But, I swear by the Lord of Zabiba and her chastity, my soul sees, my mind understands and my conscience feels that we will wage battle against them and will not interrupt it until, by the will of the God of Zabiba, Allah, the merciful and merciful, the king does so, so that heroes remain heroes, so that the banner of truth rises on its staff above the ground and so that the people have someone who is worthy of being their conscience and who thinks about them. And if Allah, the owner of the highest kingdom, wishes my soul to rise to it, this will be a great honor for me, and then heaven will become paradise, and earth its gates. May all evildoers perish!

The king immediately ordered the soldiers to immediately bring Zabiba's husband to him, because he is the key that will help uncover the conspiracy and the conspirators who participated in the abuse of Zabiba and in attempts to destroy the king. Zabiba said to the king, hearing that he was giving the order to seize her husband:

- I ask you, my king, think about what the conspirators can do when they find out that the villain has been captured.

- What can they do?

- What desperate villains do, who are threatened with captivity and death, my king. They will take the risk and attack, as is customary among the kings of Elam, and enter your palace.

- You're right, Zabiba. I will raise the army and the police so they are ready to fight and were able to endure a long siege of the palace until the conspirators and invaders died or until they weakened and the wind scattered them.

Zabiba said:

- Yes, my great king, that's exactly it. And if you allow me, I'll tell you another one thought.

- Of course, Zabiba. Say what you want to say.

- I ask that you allow me to leave the palace. I will raise the people to supported the army, and the villains will come to despair because they are left alone, and we have such powerful moral and effective support.

- Yes, Zabiba. Make it quick. But I want you to have a detachment of those loyal to me with you a soldier who will be commanded by my faithful guard Abdullah.

- Yes, my king.

Zabiba said these words with pain in her heart, remembering what she had to go through because she had recently refused to have one of the soldiers accompany her on the way from the royal palace to her house. That's what happened. And yet she would prefer to go to raise the people as one of the people. People do not like manifestations of power, especially when they are excessive. The people believe, and they believe quite rightly, that the warmth of the people does not reach the one who wears too many clothes and is not transferred to him. And the numerous guards used by a government official for appearance and intimidation can only scare the people away from him. The basis for love must be freedom and discipline. An official should not protect himself unnecessarily. If the people see that they are surrounding themselves with guards without a sufficiently serious reason, this scares ordinary people away from them. How can one who fetters himself with unnecessary fetters remove the fetters of others? The people, despite the favor of the king and my position with him, knew me as a commoner. And if people see a detachment of soldiers led by the royal guard, they will perceive me as a princess, or even as a queen. And since they do not know the king as I know him, they will run away from me. What to do? Go out without security and thereby

put our plan to resist the villains in danger? No. I must agree to be protected and trust the will of Allah. - So Zabiba thought before asking the king for permission to go to the people.

When the king noticed that she was talking to herself, he asked her:

- What are you talking about, Zabiba? Do you think any differently? Zabiba woke up and said:

- No, my king, some thoughts were spinning in my head, but I found your solution the most faithful. I will go to the people if you allow, and I sincerely appeal to Allah to whiten my face in your eyes. I believe with all my heart that Allah exists and that He is just. He is great and can make the people follow you, in accordance with the high concepts and thoughts that I explained to you, and in accordance with what I know.

"In the name of Allah," said the king.

Then Zabiba approached the king and kissed him on the forehead. The king hugged her. Then she greeted him, kneeling down and bowing her head as a sign of submission, gratitude and love, as she had once done when she first came to his palace, and as she did from time to time when the king entrusted her with some important matter, but not in everyday relationships, because the king did not want empty formalities to kill or weaken the joy of their relationship.

Zabiba returned, and people walked behind her. People shouted:

- For the homeland, for the nation, for faith, for devotion, for courage, for freedom, for justice, for the truth!

The roar of voices grew louder:

- Against treason, betrayal, oppression and persecution.

The people crowded into the palace grounds near the outer wall, and Zabiba carried the banner, and her heart was bursting from her chest. She sat astride her white horse, girded with a sword. And the army rallied, and everyone stood behind the king as their commander.

The conspirators learned that their plan was about to be revealed because of Zabiba's husband, and primarily because Zabiba's husband, although it seemed that he did not guess that Zabiba had exposed him, in fact guessed everything and decided to immediately run to conspiratorial emirs and those who supported them in neighboring kingdoms. The conspirators decided to attack the king on the same day, but did not take into account that the people, thanks to Zabiba and thanks to Allah, would become the heart and support of the king and that they would rally to provide significant assistance to the army. Therefore, when they attacked the royal palace from all sides, they were struck by a huge force, and they were taken by surprise by a swarm of arrows fired at them. And every time they made a hole in the outer wall of the palace, the masses of people did not allow them to break through deeply and seriously upset the order of the palace defenders. And the attackers turned back when they were overtaken by spears, swords and arrows of soldiers and ordinary people, and even clubs found a place in this stubborn and victorious resistance. Finally, the attackers were defeated and fled, abandoning the bodies of the slain, and became despicable fugitives, after they were deprived of high human concepts and the mercy of the merciful Lord and his favor. But just before the end of the battle, Zabiba was struck by an arrow, piercing her leather armor, which she preferred to steel chain mail in order to be different from the regular army and to merge with her people in appearance and spirit, because this was the kind of armor that the people wore when they had to fight the enemy.

They carried Zabiba to the royal chambers in the palace and laid her on the bed, and one of the guards informed the king about what had happened.

And although this news struck the king and he was ready to immediately rush to Zabiba, he nevertheless pulled himself together and said to himself:

"I'm afraid that the soldiers might mistakenly think that I'm leaving the battlefield after they wounded Zabiba, and somehow destroyed the defense. And I'm also afraid that later those who benefit from it will start spreading rumors about me. They will say that I was afraid of the battle and decided to leave

him under the pretext that I need to visit Zabiba. Be that as it may, isn't it a law of battle that the commander has no right to abandon him at the most decisive moment? Therefore, I will avenge Zabiba, cutting off the heads of traitors, and fight until certain victory with the help of God Zabiba.

And he began to rush around the battlefield, thundering with his voice and striking with his sword and spear. And when the sword in his hand became dull or the spear broke, he exchanged them for others, and this continued until the enemy was defeated.

While the millstones of the battle were turning in this way, Zabiba, lying on the royal bed, dictated the following letter to the scribe:

"My dear, beloved Airab. I don't want to say "my great king" so that the spirit of my words would not be burdened with titles and titles. Therefore, I call you as it pleases my soul at the moment when I say goodbye to you for the last time, so and without seeing you, I called you by name, may Allah preserve it as a symbol of love and honor for your people and your army.

Out of love for you, I do not refuse your offer to become your wife. This wedding was and still remains my dream and grace for me, speaking about the greatness of your soul and the strength of your love for me. I answer you with the same readiness for self-sacrifice and generosity, although my words may seem strange. But when we talk about love and devotion, strange things often happen.

I did not want you to make a decision about our wedding under the influence of these oddities, but I wanted you to make a decision after the victory that you will soon win, if Allah wills it. I will probably no longer be in your world, but I will still be able to enjoy this victory and see it in all its details. Aren't fallen heroes alive and well with the Lord? Doesn't anyone who lives there see everything that is happening on earth? Yes, I will see your victory, our victory. I will celebrate it again. I want you to enjoy the victory and your new connection with the people. For it to arise, I ask you to give the people the right to use any titles and titles appropriate to you. This is necessary, because the people who have achieved this will be sincere in their decisions, protect them and, together with you, bear full responsibility for them. In any case, after the names of kings and emirs have been stained with such disgrace, I don't think that the title of king will befit you. You must be the leader of the people and the army, their guide to virtue, construction and victory. Get closer to the people through a title that will be pleasant to them, and through such actions that will not separate you from the people, and the people from you. Be one with him. Then the people and their army will be able, under your leadership, to do things that will glorify our country and the one who rules it, and will become builders of the glorious history of our nation. Allah is great.

Please don't forget me. I am dying at the hand of a traitor. Zabiba,
daughter of the people, beloved of the Arab.

I'm dying, long live the people!

I'm dying, long live the Arab!"

* * *

Zabiba died, and the king still lived for some time after her, until Allah took him away. Day by day there were fewer and fewer kings, but in the palaces of those who still ruled, evil and treason continued to breed. And the people still showed their will when they had the opportunity to do so. The people are steadfast as eternity, as the Almighty desires.

Zabiba died, and her eyes closed at the moment when her soul reached its place in the garden of eternity, and the king mourned her with great sorrow. And he said this:

- Zabiba died, but she lives among those who ascended. She lives like a great symbol and among us. She stayed to inspire the people and me with her views, her devotion and wisdom, her great soul and perseverance, pleasing to the people and homeland. And all this will please Allah, praise be to Him, if He so wishes.

Her soul remained with us and hovers above our heads next to the souls of heroes and

the righteous, and evil and evildoers disappeared before the time. The people won and the country won. The nation won, thanks to the Almighty. The attackers failed and were defeated. The people won.

I will meet you, Zabiba, where your soul resides. Do you know how, Zabiba? Of course you do. You know that the road to you is love for the people. I must encourage his capabilities and abilities in a variety of areas and not burden him with anything unnecessary. He must bear only the most basic obligations and unchanging moral concepts. With the growth of the people's capabilities and the development of their concepts, the ladder along which I will come to you will become higher and higher.

Go, and I will fly to you on the wings of my faith, if my Lord and your Lord, Zabiba, want it. You have experienced that highest degree of freedom, Zabiba, that you spoke about. This freedom is undoubtedly higher and deeper than the freedom that we know here on earth. But it is also limited freedom, not absolute. Do you know why, Zabiba? Because by your heroic death you have achieved such a position, which is acquired in the struggle for faith, and you will not be given the opportunity to occupy a level lower than the one you have achieved, to experience a state of a lower level, and therefore you will be like kings on earth, have such a distinction, which will not allow you to become like. You will be among the best. This is how the kings whom you criticize and whom I am now criticizing with you cannot leave their palaces and live an ordinary life among the people, either permanently or even temporarily, for the difference between them is like the difference between heaven and hell.

Do you know that you cannot choose something else for yourself that is beyond the line that your heroic death drew for the cause of the nation and people? This is because absolute freedom can only be enjoyed by the one who sits on the highest throne: Your God and my God, Zabiba, Allah is merciful and merciful. He alone, praise Him, is capable of doing everything above and below his capabilities. Only He alone is capable of any state and His opposite, without the slightest hint of duality. Heaven and hell, angels and demons, earth and sky, day and night, sun and darkness - all at his command and thanks to his wisdom. Now you see that there is no absolute freedom, although we possess its highest concept, as long as there remains at least something above or below our capabilities. Allah has endowed us with a higher understanding of ability and freedom.

May Zabiba remain in heaven!

And let her live on earth.

* * *

The people saw off Zabiba, and the sons of the people carried her coffin. Everyone tried to gain her blessing. The people and the army mourned her, and the king followed for a long time ahead of the procession behind her coffin. They mourned her bitterly, and when the earth became her last refuge, the king ordered the body of her husband, who was among the dead, to be buried in a hole far from her grave.

When people found out about this, they threw stones and everything they could get their hands on, including garbage, at his grave. And it became a custom in the life of the people to gather every year on the day falling on January 17 according to the Christian chronology to stone the vile criminal, and with him all the invaders and traitors. Having consigned them to a curse, people went with wreaths of laurel and roses to the grave of Zabiba and offered prayers for her, the heroine of the people, devoted to him in life and in death.

And the Arab announced that, before entering the battle, Zabiba became his wife, that she divorced her traitor husband. The king announced that he himself had witnessed this and was himself a qadi*, for he was given the right to control the destinies of people.

This is the difference between fallen heroes and living ones, between living and dead. Between fighters and those who betrayed Allah and their homeland, people and nation. Between those who bring freedom to their people, nation and country, and those who retreat from everything dear and commit treason.

Long live a glorious life and death, pleasing to Allah and angering enemies!

Allah is great.

May all evildoers perish!

* * *

Zabiba died, and let Zabiba live. So the people in all corners of the kingdom proclaimed, as if in contrast to the cry: "The king is dead, long live the king!", which sounded when one king died and another reigned, occupying his throne and inheriting his title. These outcries of the people were clearly directed against the country being ruled again by a king, no matter who he was.

And so, when the battle of the people and the army against the great conspiracy, directed not so much against the royal throne and the life of the king, but to dismember the kingdom and divide the loot among foreign kingdoms that supported the conspiratorial emirs and supplied them with weapons of destruction and destruction, ended in victory. Among the masses of people from the army and the people who distinguished themselves by high thoughts and participation in battles, those who could not boast of such differences crept in, hoping to take advantage of the opportunity and gain their own benefit. These were large merchants and landowners who had everything they had by inheritance, and not by merit and sacrifice in this fateful battle. There were others with them who had their own interests, but were not distinguished by high thoughts and courage.

Isn't this what most often happens if the nation and those who represent its conscience and will do not attach importance to this? Doesn't it happen that the army and the people die in battle, and someone else, not distinguished by either purity or beauty in the field of sacrifice, patience and activity, appropriates someone else's glory and takes away what is not rightfully due to him?

And so the people's council met with its representatives, and others who had infiltrated here and were in the minority should not have gotten into it, because the battle made it clear who had the right to bear the title of people's representative. But some weak individuals entered there, who did not know the experience of the people and the degree of their sacrifice, because the concept of loyalty to the people had not yet matured in them and they had not yet driven out weakness from themselves. Not only the weakness of fear, but any weakness, including that which praises those who do not deserve praise.

Therefore, those who were in the minority found loopholes in weak souls that allowed them to infiltrate and occupy places in the people's council that were not intended for them.

A people's council gathered from people of various backgrounds, and each of them had his own dignity. There were men and women, military and civilians, farmers and artisans, and many others. But most of all, the attention was attracted by the majestic woman, from whose behavior and attire it was clear that she was a peasant. When she entered the hall, she was carrying in her arms a child no older than a year. Having sat down in one of the seats in the hall, she placed the child on her lap.

A discussion began about the fate of royal power, led by the oldest of those present. This respectable man stood out for his views and character, which was evident from his self-confidence. He possessed enormous physical strength that belied his years, which were approaching sixty-five. Isn't self-confidence the strength of those who use it as they deserve?

The elder leading the meeting slammed his fist on the table he was sitting at. To his right sat one of the military leaders, to his left was a woman with a sword, from whose appearance it was clear that she had participated in the mass resistance to the invaders in the king's palace.

Everyone who was present in the hall, some thinking about their own things, some talking with neighbors, fell silent when they heard the chairman of the meeting knock on the table. And he attracted their attention with a voice, the seriousness of which hardly anyone doubted:

- Listen, everyone! Before we begin, it becomes us, and duty and gratitude

They demand the same thing, to honor the souls of the fallen heroes, and above all the soul of Zabiba, the daughter of the people, the symbol of self-sacrifice and heroism of our great people and its brave army, by standing up, remembering all the wounded and praying for their recovery.

The crowd gathered in the hall did not allow the speaker to say anything else. Hearing Zabiba's name, the hall exploded with applause. Screams of joy and greetings mingled with bitter sobs, and tears began to flow, even from the eyes of those who did not allow themselves to cry. The military even cried, although by their purpose and character they should be as hard as ice, because in battle they see their friends falling dead next to them, and yet they continue to carry out their combat mission. It was arranged this way so that the combat power of the army would not be scattered and that none of the combatants would be distracted from their duties and the overall plan.

Even the military began to cry when they heard Zabiba's name. Did anyone other than Zabiba deserve to have her eyes shed tears and her hearts bleed in longing for her?

The buzz of voices grew.

Long live Zabiba, daughter of the people and their inspiration!

Long live Zabiba, symbol of heroism and glory!

May all evildoers perish!

And no one glorified the king, except one merchant, who was undeservedly present at the meeting. But those who sat next to him silenced him, making him understand that what he was saying was causing dissonance. Moreover, for a single voice to be heard, it must have not only enormous power, but also undoubted rightness.

After they said everything they said, glorifying the terrible and stubborn battle, its symbols and heroes, the hall calmed down. But those who sat next to the woman who placed the child on her lap were struck by the fact that she was the only one present who was not crying. She remained silent and did not utter a word. And when those sitting next to her asked her about this or looked questioningly into her eyes, she smiled slightly and said:

"There are no more tears left in my eyes to shed." I had five sons and on my lap is the son of the eldest of them. My tears will not bring back my sons. They were ranked among the symbols of heroism and glory of our great people. And I came here to support those who need support from within and without, so that chatterboxes and those who pretend to be experts do not emasculate the concepts of heroism, courage and gratitude, so that we do not forget Zabiba and what our sons did, who sacrificed their life. Remembering what the great people did, in whose ranks were my five sons, and led by Zabiba, we are obliged to carefully preserve the security of our land and our unity. We must choose someone who, thanks to his special qualities, will lead us, who will rule us justly in the present and in the future. Only in this case will we thwart the plans of our enemies, only then will the self-sacrifice of the people not remain a thing of the past, but will be honored and encouraged by the sons of the people to sacrifice themselves, if necessary, following their example.

"I, my sister (or my daughter)," she addressed those women who they asked, in accordance with their age, I strain my consciousness and gather all my remaining strength into a fist in order to forever preserve in my memory the goal for which the blood of my sons and Zabiba was shed. I do not scream or cry with you, so as not to waste my last strength in order to see those who, with their praise, will try to lead us away from the goal for which my sons, our sons, our heroes sacrificed themselves. To notice those who want to betray the blood of Zabiba, the daughter of the people and the soul of the people. That is why I only listen and try to understand what is happening in front of me, and do not occupy myself at the moment with anything else other than this.

Hearing these words, the women stopped crying, and the men wiped their tears with their keffiyehs or their hands, and said everything to this glorious woman:

- Allah is with you and He will strengthen you! We will all be guards protecting the principles for which the heroes of Iraq and his glorious daughters gave their lives, for which the survivors and those who are already with our Lord in heaven fought. We will not allow impostors, charlatans and nonentities to consign to oblivion the sacrifice of our sons, brothers and sisters, our symbols. We won't let them

to do this, and what needs to be preserved in memory from the concepts of history, homeland and faith, people will remember for centuries.

* * *

Then everyone again heard the chairman of the meeting slamming his fist on the table and fell silent. After everyone had released some of the reserves of their tears that were languishing in their chests, their souls became more pliable, and they themselves stopped disrupting the order that required maintaining calm and discipline in the hall.

The chairman of the meeting said, and his name was Abd Rabbigj*:

- I remind you of the order of speech in this room. First of all, we should talk about the main tasks and not waste words uselessly. While observing all decency, we still should not shine with words in vain, because gold remains gold, even if there is earth on top of it. And if the gold is not real, then, of course, it will have to be polished until it shines, removing rust, so that people think it is gold.

Anyone who is granted this right by a majority of those present will be able to speak on the topics that we will discuss in accordance with the agenda, but no one will speak twice on the same issue if there are others who wish to speak. Anyone who wants to speak must ask permission by raising his right hand. The chairman of the meeting will give the floor, and if you have no objections or any amendments regarding the order of the meeting, let's immediately move on to the agenda.

Nuri Jallabi raised his hand. The chairman of the meeting allowed him to speak, and it was clear to everyone that he was one of those who belonged to the nobles of this world. He did not have a clear position in relation to the people and the army, and he was clearly undeservedly included in this meeting.

He stood up and said:

- Previously, it was customary for us to give the first word to the best people in society, and not everyone. Why are you breaking tradition?

The chairman replied:

- Our meeting is its own boss. We develop the rules by majority decision, and they are established by those who submit to the assembly and observe its decisions in their lives.

One of the soldiers raised his hand and said:

- I agree with what the chairman of the meeting says, but I would like to add something. If we are ready to accept everything old as it is, then why are we gathered here?

Most of the people in the hall clapped for him.

Ahmad Al-Hasan asked to speak, raising his hand. It was clear from his appearance that he was one of the outstanding people who led the resistance to the invaders. He was about forty years old. When the chairman of the meeting gave him the floor, he stood up and said:

- It is difficult to adhere to this order of holding a meeting, and it would be possible listen to our friend," he pointed his hand at Nuri Jallabi, who proposed changing the order of giving the floor. But let me ask, who gave him the right to consider himself one of the best people in society, and therefore to speak out before others? On what basis did he come to this conclusion?

When Nuri Jallabi replied that he had inherited this right from his fathers, Ahmad Al-Hasan said:

- What we have inherited from traditions must be observed by those who respect these traditions, or to those on whom they are assigned as duties by those in power against his will, and our friend Nuri Jallabi has no power here. The inheritance is divided here according to right, which still needs to be earned. We do not believe what you say, and we are not the sons of your father for you to give us an inheritance. You cannot impose on us an order that was convenient for you under the conditions of power based on inheritance of the throne. We have gathered precisely to discuss this order, and there are enough people here who

wants to change it.

Nuri Jallabi shouted when he saw that his arguments were groundless:

- Do you want to say that you will change the order of royal power?

Despite the surprise that he tried to portray, his words sounded uncertain and unsteady. And Ahmad Al-Hasan, smiling, said:

- Yes, if two-thirds of those gathered here agree, we will change the regime. Nuri Jallabi said:

- What, and change the king?

Ahmad Al-Hasan answered on behalf of the people:

- Yes, we will change the king. We will replace the one who became king in the absence of the will of the people, thanks to the power and policies of foreign powers that install kings in our lands, including the kings of our vast land, against the will and desire of the people.

Now that the will of the people has declared itself, and unjust will and foreign forces cannot impose their influence on us, those who represent the people and their armed forces have the right to express their decisive opinion about what the people need and what is unacceptable to them.

Nuri Jallabi, who came to the meeting deceitfully and undeservedly, fell silent and did not find what to answer.

Then the chairman of the meeting spoke:

- I ask you not to rush to discuss an issue that we have not yet put on the agenda day. Let's continue our meeting.

The chairman repeated:

- Is there anyone in this room who opposes this order of holding the meeting?

* * *

The mother of five fallen heroes raised her hand. The Chairman allowed her to speak and she said:

- Each meeting should have its own purpose and essence, at least initially. If we still have not decided under what slogan to hold this meeting, I don't think anyone will be against the fact that we have gathered here to glorify our heroes.

The hall was noisy with cheers and applause. And the

mother of the heroes, continuing, said:

- Truly, Zabiba is the heroine of the people and their inspirer, a symbol of their heroism and self-sacrifice, so I propose to bring her portrait and hang it high above the table of the chairman of the meeting, so that it will seem to everyone that she is above our heads, and so that everyone sitting in the hall can see her. This will at least determine the main direction of our meeting.

The Chairman said:

- Proposal from the mother of the heroes to hang a portrait of Zabiba in the center of the meeting room above with our heads deserves respect.

The chairman of the meeting hit the table in front of him and said:

- Now that it has become clear that the majority agrees with the order of our meeting, let's move on to discussing the agenda.

The main item on the agenda should be the problem of power, which Zabiba reminded the king about in her advice. She said that the king must make the will of the people determining the form of government and the manner in which power is exercised. And since the people have found their will, they must have their say.

Despite the fact that the king himself was not present in the hall, and the will of the people had great weight in the form of its representatives, many refused to discuss this issue, and the reason for this hesitation was probably awe of power or fear of the personality of the ruler, respect for the position that occupied by the king, and Zabiba's attitude towards him, which could be judged by her letter. And this mood did not pass until one of the representatives of the people said, whose clothes were still stained with the blood of the battle, in which the blood

his wounds mixed with the blood of those whom he struck with sword and dagger:

- None of us have any grudge against the king, especially after he fought alongside us, but he could not remain king without the support of the people and the army and resist those who competed with him for the royal throne from the emirs, based on the principle: "If there is no choice, choose the best of evils." His father and grandfathers made us endure a lot, and the people knew nothing from them but misfortunes. If I showed you my back, you would see that I am one of those thousands whose backs were burned by the executioners' lashes, leaving eternal marks on them. We have had enough of the hunger, backwardness and humiliation that have struck us thanks to our rulers. Even when we say that this king is different from all other kings, we are responsible for the fact that he is considered the best among the rest in character. Wasn't Zabiba, the daughter of the people, by carrying out the will of the people, responsible for forcing him to take a different position and making him a different person? Didn't the people do the king a favor, including instilling faith in Allah in his heart after he was an infidel? Was it not the people who saved his life and manhood, not to mention the royal honor, in the face of the invaders and their conspiracy? And we did all this in order to put the king on our heads again? Even if we can vouch for the personality of this king and for the fact that the people recognize him, the country recognizes him, and in principle believe him, then how can we vouch for those who will take his throne by inheritance? We do not want to be ruled by a teenager, or even a child. We do not want our children or ourselves to be ruled by any crazy one of the children or grandchildren of this king.

The hall was drowned in laughter, and then applause rang out as a sign of support for what the speaker had said.

And he continued his speech:

- Be that as it may, I ask you to distinguish between the personal opinions of each of us regarding the tsar and our general principled opinion regarding the regime of the tsarist power, so that we do not confuse anything.

* * *

Another man raised his hand, and it was clear that this was a major merchant from among those who trade between Iraq and the kingdom of Elam. He said:

- Royal power is a reality, whether we accept it or not. This is our regime with time immemorial, and the people have already come to terms with it. How will we trade with other kingdoms and in our lands if there is no stability in the country?

Someone sitting next to him made a sign to him, and he wanted to continue, but the chairman of the meeting beat him to it:

- Do you want us to live calmly with what we ourselves have chosen, or to put up with what
What did we inherit just because it suits your interests?

And the merchant continued:

- We must put up with the current situation so that our trade flourished because the known path, with all its shortcomings, is better than the path that leads to an unknown destination, even if it seemed to us at first that the second one was better. The popular wisdom is right when it says: "If you cannot cut off your hand, kiss it."

One of those present, asking permission, asked a question:

- And who is better - you, along with what you have, or your father, the porter who carried once the goods of traders in the markets? Why didn't you inherit the fortune that was left to you from your father? Is it the duty of the people to increase your wealth and accept your iniquity, so that someone can get rich, just as you got rich at the expense of the merchant who, out of respect for your father, hired you as a scribe? When the merchant died, he had no one left except his only daughter. You have appropriated all his property and now you want everything to remain as it is, as suits you, including royal power, just so that you can preserve your illegally acquired wealth and enjoy the patronage of those bosses to whom you gave bribes for their silence and protection? Is it fair, my friend, that we continue to make mistakes and protect someone else?

illegal interests, while the people bear and in the future will bear the burden of something that is long overdue for a radical change?

Applause rang out in the hall. The one who raised this question ran out of the hall, not paying attention to anyone. He left the meeting and cursed the day when the people took the position that gave them the strength, the victory over the invaders, the will and desire for controversy and the consciousness necessary to speak the word of truth.

* * *

Shamil raised his hand, and he was forty years old. When the chairman of the meeting gave him the floor, he, having delivered a whole speech about gratitude and devotion, about respect for law and tradition, with some theatricality, which, however, could not deceive the inquisitive mind, said:

- I am not going to defend the royal power, but I want to say that our king has the right to the kingdom on the basis that he fought alongside us. Zabiba, our symbol, was pleased with him even before her death.

So he said: "He fought with us." But before he continued speaking, he was interrupted by one of the resistance leaders sitting nearby and addressed the chairman of the meeting:

- The speaker said that the king fought with us, which means that he himself was among those who fought in our great people's battle against the invaders and conspirators, but this is not true. This man did not fight with us. He speculated in the money market and weakened our currency for his own benefit. He resold food and profited at the expense of the people. Let the chairman demand an explanation from him in front of those present. Where and when did he or his father fight with us? I say this because his father also speculated with money in the market. Both his father and himself were brought to court more than once on charges of counterfeiting money. And the tsarist regime, such as it is, with all sorts of loopholes, with its decayed justice and police, always allowed them to evade punishment, either by giving bribes to interested people, or by presenting forged documents to prove their innocence.

Shamil the Jew stood up and said:

- I fought in this battle against the invaders: I paid money for military service compensation. I did not think that mobilization to fight foreign invaders concerned me, but I sent my slave, paying him four times more than usual, when I paid him very little, gave him food and cast-offs from my clothes.

Then an officer stood up - one of the military commanders and leaders of the resistance - and said:

- I'm surprised, how can you listen to this charlatan? How can you let him spread in this meeting, the sanctity of which is reflected in its purposes? I know Shamil and I know that he has a son who is already over twenty, but he saved him from the battle. He did not serve in the regular army, because he avoided service in every possible way, taking advantage of all kinds of concessions. I know for sure that Shamil's son was not in the ranks of the army during the courageous resistance, when our country and people were subjected to the most cruel and vile conspiracy. According to general mobilization, Shamil himself was obliged to be drafted into the reserve, but he was not among those who fought. In addition, he helped children from wealthy families flee abroad, saving them from conscription. With this, he dealt a direct blow to our country and people, because a country without an army becomes defenseless against those who want to seize it by force. For this, his citizenship should be deprived, and anyone who ceases to be a citizen loses the right to represent the people at this meeting. I propose to expel him from our meeting and from our people in general.

Everyone became excited, supporting this idea (except for a small number of those present, who remained silent for fear that then the people's representatives would simply explode), and spoke loudly:

- Drive Shamil, let him get away! Get him out of our meeting. Drive with

our land. The curse is on him from this day until the end of his life!

People pushed his shoulders, and he jumped out of the hall beside himself, after falling several times, dropping items of clothing and things along the way and not even trying to pick them up.

* * *

A military man, who was not wearing combat clothing, asked to speak. It was clear from his clothes and appearance that he had not fought in the ranks of the resistance. Everything said that this was one of the rear staff officers from the capital, in which people like him spend their entire service and are promoted unfairly, as happens at the front and in combat units. He stood up, with the freshness of his face, hands and neck, reminiscent of a housewife from a rich family. After he introduced himself, talking about what he had done (first of all, he published several brochures and books on education, mealtimes, rules of interaction between officers in the canteen) and that he was working on issues of supply and military trade, He said:

"Truly, our king inherited the kingdom from his father. Disinherit him - means adopting a law that will deprive all the sons of the people of what they inherited from their fathers, and this is a very dangerous phenomenon. I believe that depriving the people, including the military, of the opportunity to inherit anything material or intangible from their fathers will not be approved by either the people or the army. It is unlikely that I will distort reality if I say that everyone who is present here and has an inheritance from their fathers will not agree with this, with the exception, perhaps, of those who do not know their fathers or have not received anything from them, because those there was nothing.

The floor was asked by a man who was in the army during the battle, which was easy to understand from his appearance, clothes and the bandage with which the wound on his left shoulder was bandaged. He said this:

- I thank Allah and the leaders of the resistance, and among them the chairman of this meeting, for giving us the opportunity to discuss everything in this hall and making sure that weakness was removed from the chests of those who were considered weak, through faith and service to the noble cause of our people and country. I ask you to allow me to point out the weaknesses of those whose weaknesses should be pointed out, because these people have become so immoral that they are no longer able to notice their weaknesses and have become so accustomed to them that they are no longer ashamed of them, but on the contrary, they talk about them like this: as if this is how people should behave.

The catchphrase "A candle drives away darkness, just as faith drives away the shaitan" contains a lot of wisdom that strengthened our positions. And the meeting is a real banner for those who have taken the right path, and the rising of the sun that will disperse the darkness. I want to say briefly, dear brothers and sisters, my comrades and children, I am addressing those who fit this definition. The officer who has just addressed you fell into the ranks of our glorious army through the oversight of the careless and the inability of the weak to express their opinions. His father was an army general. He sought the favor of our king's father and constantly repeated to him that the highest honor and reward for him was to hold the stirrup of the horse when the king sits on horseback and to kiss his foot. So he kissed the shoe of the former king until Allah took him away. This officer's mother invited men and women to frivolous mixed celebrations, and when the king chose the one of the women he liked, she undertook to find out whether she would submit to the king's wishes, and during the course of the holiday she took her to the royal chambers. This officer and his wife did not care about anything, they simply attended these nightly revels. I can now call hundreds of officers so that you can ask them how many of them this officer invited to his house under the pretext of lunch or dinner. Ask if they know the location of the bedrooms in his house. Have they ever been in the house in the absence of the owner? Ask if it ever happened that they came to his house without their families. Did the mistress of the house invite them to drink soft drinks, tea or coffee when her husband was not at home. This officer never taught anyone, either in the field or anywhere else. If you tell him to prepare a company for defense or attack, he will not be able to do this, not to mention the fact that he did not participate in the battles in which his army entered, although

this is what his duties dictate. So how can he, my comrades and children, my brothers and sisters, how can he sit here next to us? How can this person bear the title of a warrior of our fearless army? Is it permissible for him to wear a military uniform, which has become a symbol and honor for the one who wears it?

In the hall there was applause and a roar of voices from those who glorified the army and the people, and the military shouted:

- We have nothing in common with him! It would be an insult to us if he remained in our ranks.

And again applause and shouts were heard in the hall, from which it was clear that those present supported the military. When the officer who had taken such a shameful position left the hall, it seemed that even the air was preventing him from walking. And if he had not been wearing a military uniform, blows would have rained down on him from all sides.

* * *

The man who was nicknamed the "Emir Hunter" raised his hand. Everyone knew him by this name instead of his real name, which was somehow forgotten in his heroic exploits. With his spear, arrows and even a dagger, he killed this or that emir or large merchant, as if he was an expert in this matter and had to hunt only them.

Despite the fact that he did not have a horse, when he overcame one of them, he was like a wolf pouncing on a sheep that had strayed from the herd. Because of his incredible speed and strength, none of them managed to escape him alive. He caught up with the horse and grabbed it by the tail or stirrup, since he was not very tall. In an instant, the rider and horse found themselves on the ground, and he was on the rider's chest, and immediately cut off his head or pierced him with a spear with such force that it went into the ground.

Because of his short stature, he could have been nicknamed "Shorty" if they had not been afraid to give him such a nickname after his heroic exploits, the fame of which had spread everywhere, and if they had not known how he felled one emir after another and how deftly he could dodge from the blow of a spear, sword and arrow.

When the chairman allowed him to speak, the Emir Hunter mumbled something inaudibly. His face first turned red, then turned yellow, because he was embarrassed by the position in which he found himself and which seemed to be strangling him, not allowing him to speak. He looked like a bird of the field caught in a snare. She flaps her wings and jumps from place to place, trying to save her life. When he realized that he could not convey his words loudly and clearly to those gathered in the hall, he turned to his neighbor for help. He grabbed him, forced him to stand up and placed him next to him. From the way he behaved, everyone understood that he was mute and that he was asking his neighbor to interpret his words to those sitting in the hall. And this neighbor was his old friend and one of the most courageous fighters in the people's army of armed resistance.

The hunter of emirs either muttered, or uttered bird screeching sounds, or used various signs, and his friend conveyed his words to the listeners, putting them into ordinary phrases, as if translating from one language to another. He said:

"I greet you, my brothers and sisters, and I salute your sacrifices." I bow down kneel in the name of Allah, the great and mighty, before the rivers of blood of fallen fighters, the most important and purest rivers. I, the obedient servant of Allah, the Hunter of Emirs, as you called me, and thanks to him I am so humble. No one knows my story, and no one knows why I took the lives of only emirs and rich merchants.

Apart from them, I did not shoot arrows at anyone, I did not hit anyone with a spear or chop with a sword - even those who, in the heat of battle, wanted to take my life. Even if I saw that they wanted to kill me, I found a way to avoid the blow without striking back. I did not want to waste my strength on someone who was not an emir or a rich merchant who acquired his wealth unjustly and unjustly, because they are worms that have undermined the trunk of every noble tree in our kingdom, they are parasites of life and a deadly poison, dirt that sticks to white clothes. To help you understand all this, here is my story.

I served with one of the emirs, and he trusted me. He taught me the art of war so that I would cover his back day and night when I accompanied him on hunts or on other matters.

During one of his trips, the emir tried to woo a girl of wonderful beauty from her father. And the latter was the leader of his tribe, a man of the highest reputation and noble deeds and thoughts. When her father explained to the Emir that his nephew wanted her and she wanted this young man, the Emir said that he would postpone the conversation until the next day, and threatened him with death if he did not want to marry him to his daughter. The father, fearing the consequences, was forced to marry them. The emir decided to visit her in his tent camp, which stood next to the Arabs of his father's tribe, instead of taking her with him to the capital and having a wedding there, as the emirs do. I tell the truth, he showered the girl's father with rich gifts. But all these gifts did not cause anything in the father except sadness for his daughter and sadness because of her wedding with the emir, because in the traditions of this noble man and his tribe it was not to marry their daughters to anyone other than their nephews. The girls chose one of them who expressed a desire to get married, and rejected someone, the fathers confirmed the choice with their decision. This custom became a subject of respect even for those people who did not accept it, because it reduced all social differences between the two sexes to a minimum, and made family life stable and measured. Unanimity grew between husbands and wives, and quarrels of any kind occurred extremely rarely.

The girl's father understood that her wedding with the emir, imposed by force, would be a violation of tradition, which he could not break, but, on the contrary, he should have monitored how it was observed in his tribe. Isn't it a disgrace for the leader of a tribe if he puts up with the fact that some stranger is breaking the traditions and foundations of his tribe?

On the first wedding night, or I'll recover and say: at noon of the same day, my lord the emir tried (he said "my lord" with sarcasm, wanting to demonstrate to everyone how the "translator" understood from the gestures of the mute Emir Hunter, who smiled at everyone sitting in hall) to approach this girl in his tent, but she rejected him and treated him rather rudely. And when he answered her in kind, she threatened him and cursed him with the very last words. This is what she told him:

- You behave not like an emir, but like the most insignificant person. Otherwise how could I agree? You should sleep with a woman who doesn't want you, but, on the contrary, despises you because you insist on intimacy with her! Don't you know how much women hate those who force them to do illegal things that they don't want?

When the emir said that he had wooed her from her father, she replied angrily:

"You didn't woo me at all, but stole me from my father, from my family and from my tribe." U we are disgusted that our name will be combined with your name or the name of those like you. I will always think of you this way, and my opinion will not change.

When the emir heard such words from her, he was forced to leave the tent. I heard all this because I was waiting near the tent, ready to fulfill any request of my lord, and she pronounced her words so loudly that it could be heard outside.

At the word "sovereign" he smiled contemptuously, and with him the majority of those present. He continued:

- When the emir's gaze fell on me, and he was leaving the tent, he became entangled in the flaps of his robe, and his sword fell to the ground. I picked up the ukal and handed it to him, blowing the dust off it as if I was spitting in the despicable face of the emir. But I wanted to spit even more when he said, before he took the sword from me and put it on my head:

- Bring her a jug of chamomile infusion and tell her that your master loves her and that his eyes have not known sleep since the day he saw her on the pond... Ask her to be merciful to your master, otherwise he will go crazy or kill her.

I asked him in surprise:

-Are you really going to kill her, my lord? How are you going to do this if we are guests?

her tribe? Do you want to disgrace her tribe by killing her on her wedding night? What will they say about this?

He answered me, and it was obvious that he was angry:

"If she doesn't submit to me and won't sleep with me, put poison in her food." To test the depth of his maliciousness, I asked:

- Should I add poison, my lord? He said:

- Yes, you put poison in her food or drink, and then we will say that she was bitten viper. We will find the viper, kill it and throw it on the floor in the tent, and then say that we killed it after it bit the girl, but we were unable to help her and save her life.

I asked:

- Are you serious, my lord? He

answered sharply and decisively:

- Yes, in all seriousness. If the despicable one does not submit to me this night, and you after

If you don't give her poison, I'll kill both you and her. You have no choice but to go and convince her.

When I tried to pacify his anger, the emir said:

- Listen, everything will be as I said. I know one wisdom: "If you saw neighbor's candle and you cannot steal it to illuminate your house, break it with an arrow so that it goes out, or it will burn down its owner's house."

When the despicable emir revealed to me what was on his mind, I realized that he had decided to commit an atrocity.

I told him:

- I'll try, but please don't rush me and give me the rest of this day and tomorrow day.

He answered me in a decisive tone that brooked no objection:

- Part of the coming night and the rest of this day. Not more. Having asked permission from my mistress, I entered the tent.

Those gathered noticed that the mute and the one who translated his gestures and mutterings grinned at the word "madam."

And the mute continued his story:

"I said to her with respect: "My lady, I heard everything you said to this man, I mean the emir, and understood everything. I agree with you in everything you think and in everything you told him, down to the smallest detail, but I ask you to be kind and listen to me. Allah is my witness that I desire nothing from you except that you help me save you. To save you, not me, your life and the honor of your father, not my life. Not my life."

When she heard me repeat the words "not my life" twice, she looked at me in amazement, raising her head, which she had kept bowed, believing that everyone who was in the Emir's tent was an enemy to her and her father, an enemy to her betrothed and her tribe, and I would add to myself - the enemy of any free noble person.

I told her what the Emir had told me, and especially insisted that if she did not feign consent, either of her own free will or after my persuasion, then I could only guess what might happen to her. But I added to this:

- Despite what I told you, I swear by Allah, if you ordered me to kill him, I would have killed him for the sake of delivering all the highest, and if I had ordered him to return with you to your father's house, I would have done what you ordered. But you, of course, understand that both will bring shame on your head, on the head of your good father and on your noble tribe. I am telling you about this only so that you can be sure that my goal is not to save my own skin, but to save you, to save your honor. I do not pursue my goals and obey the slightest movement of your fingers.

She looked into my eyes for a long time, as if hypnotizing, and in her gaze there was a readiness for something that I could not even imagine. I felt embarrassed

this look, because I could not offer her any other solution other than to submit to what was disgusting to her soul, and yet I am a courageous person. Is it worthy when a man like me convinces a woman to submit to a man whose soul does not accept her? We should cut off the heads of all pimps and pimps, regardless of whether they do their dirty deeds for ordinary people or for emirs and rich merchants!

She told me:

- Well done, may Allah bless you, I will tell the emir that your arguments are convincing me, so that you do not lose his favor and remain close to me and I can consult with you. Keep what we talked about secret, and I promise you that I will not tell him the details of our conversation.

I flew on wings of joy because I had completed this unpleasant task. The mute fell silent, and tears flowed down his cheeks, spreading like autumn rain on the ground.

He wiped away his tears and stood silently, and everyone sitting in the hall was silent with him, waiting again to hear the sounds of the story in which the translator would clothe his signs. Time passed, and the chairman was forced to ask:

- What next?

"I conveyed her words to the emir that he could enter the tent. And I heard her say

to him:

"Your man convinced me with his arguments, and I will obey your commands, but I have one request. I beg you, don't make me disappointed in you. My family and my tribe have this tradition. The one who marries a stranger remains with him as a guest for a month, so that the wedding is considered final. And all this month her husband is hosting her father and her tribe.

She told him:

"I don't think you want me to be worse than those women of my tribe who got married this way. If you accept my condition, I will remain in debt, and if you don't accept, it will be your own fault that I will continue to feel like you raped me.

When he tried to reduce the sentence, Zabya* refused him.

And although he said that every day out of thirty would cost him a herd of camels of a hundred heads, or a thousand sheep, or a kilogram of gold, Zabya did not agree to anything.

I learned this from her later, during our journey, when we crossed the desert on the way to the capital, after the emir could not resist her demand, hoping to gain her favor. And in the second week after our appearance in the capital, a conspiracy happened and a battle broke out. And we decided, having discussed everything among ourselves, to join the resistance, I as I am, and she, dressed in the clothes of a young man. That day I did not yet know what plan had matured in her head. I didn't know if she was planning something or just trying to gain time while waiting for consolation from the owner of great joy, merciful and merciful.

And the dumb man began to sob at the top of his voice, but after a while he controlled himself. Anger and pride flashed in his eyes.

He said with strength and confidence:

- You will probably ask, where and when did I lose my language?

The next day after our arrival in the capital, the emir came to me with a dozen of his guards. They came suddenly, tied my hands behind my back and tangled my legs. Then they threw me on the floor, and one of them stepped on my jaw with his foot and said:

- Stick out your tongue! We'll tie it up with a rope so you don't spill the beans.

the emir entrusted you with.

I believed them, or at least I had to pretend to, and they tied my tongue with a rope. Then they pulled the rope forcefully and cut off my tongue with a dagger.

Everyone shouted:

- Allah is great. Down with the emirs and kings!
- Down with royal power!
- Long live the people!
- Long live the army! The mute continued his story:

- I saw among the ten guards of the emir three sons of rich merchants, whom he took them with him to save them from military service and so that they would be next to him in his fun and nightly adventures. Isn't it clear now why my targets in this sacred battle were the emirs and rich merchants? Is it not clear what the shortcomings of the tsarist regimes are? But now Allah has opened our eyes. Here's my witness. You can listen to it if you want to know more.

While his comrade was translating his gestures, the Emir Hunter retreated into the next room and returned from there with a man whose hands and feet were tied and his mouth was gagged with a rag. He pulled out a rag, untied his legs and said, gesticulating nervously, and the translator translated:

- Are you the emir?
- Yes.

- Tell me, I defeated you in battle, standing face to face, and not with meanness, as I used to do you? I grabbed the horse you were sitting on by the neck and threw him to the ground. Then he jumped on your chest and disarmed you. I tied your hands and feet and dragged you from the battlefield, and then left Zabya to guard you until it was all over. It was?

The emir was silent. He lowered his gaze in confusion, and the dumb man angrily squealed at him:

- You heard everything that I told the meeting, because your ears and eyes were free, when I left you in that room. So tell them whether I'm telling the truth or not. If you don't want to answer, I'll find someone else to speak for you.

When he said this phrase, a man stood up in the hall. Everyone thought he was a young resistance fighter because he was in full combat gear, and his clothes inspired respect and spoke of greatness. But then he removed the veil from his face and spoke in the voice of a woman:

- It's me, Zabya, the daughter of the leader of my tribe. Truly, every sound and every the word spoken by the Emir Hunter is true. I swear by Allah, he is telling the truth. But I ask you to give me this man and not to torture him, because I made a vow to Allah to forgive him if I defeat him. I told this creature, when I asked for a month's delay, that if he fulfilled my request, then I would remain in debt. I don't think the Hunter of Emirs would want a debt to remain on my conscience. How do I know, and how do you know, perhaps my misfortune was combined with the misfortune of the Emir Hunter and the misfortunes of everyone whom the emir, his associates and those of the kings made unhappy so that Allah would be angry with them and allow us to defeat them. Doesn't Allah Almighty deserve that we fulfill our promises before his face, even if no one except him alone, praise him, knows about them? To make it clear to you, I will say that I swore by Allah to save the life of this loser, so I ask that my brother the Emir Hunter, who defeated him in battle, agree not to be killed, but to be thrown into prison for the rest of his days. So I will fulfill my duty to him and return the bride price paid for the marriage, if my father agrees to this wedding and if the Hunter of Emirs fulfills my request. And if my father does not bless my marriage, let him do with the bride price as he pleases.

The hunter of emirs said, wiping away tears:

- As you command, my lady and sister, unless Allah wishes otherwise. I say to you before this assembly of these good people, men and women, do with him whatever you want. I'm even sure that after he gives you a divorce, you will let him go and not throw him in prison.

I confess that when Allah gave me the strength to defeat him on the battlefield, I tried

defeat him not out of hatred for him for what he did to me, but because of my anger directed against the rotten regime of power, of which he is an evil example, and for the sake of the victory of the people's cause.

From this moment on, it doesn't matter to me at all, especially if Zabya asks for it, my lady, whether he will continue to live as a cursed and dishonorable creature or die a despicable death, no one will regret him.

Zabya interrupted him:

- The wedding between me and this despicable never took place, but my bride price Father, as I learned from him, has not yet given his orders. He accepted the bride price from this nonentity, fearing for his entire tribe, and not just for my life and his. But this one didn't come to me, as I already said, and therefore I don't owe him anything.

The Hunter of Emirs said:

- Be that as it may, he is now your property, and you can dispose of him, as you wish. His influence and weight among people became zero, he was as good as dead. However, he died even earlier, when his conscience died, when the beginnings of goodness, nobility and faith died in his soul. I know such people and I know that their influence ends when they are deprived of power to rely on and those who can support them. I want my sister and mistress to know all this, because she believed me. And this scoundrel, who cut out my tongue, probably thought that he would be able to cut off the truth. He did not understand that, even without knowing anything about it, his actions would be enough for us, including the fact that he deprived me of my tongue and tried to marry you.

Manage it. You have the right to do whatever you want, and you shouldn't feel like you owe me anything. I am also free in my choice and I believe that you have repaid your debt to me.

There were exclamations and applause in the hall, as well as curses and curses against the emir and the royal authorities.

* * *

One of those sitting raised his hand, asking to speak. From his appearance it was clear that he was one of the rural landowners, but not one of the sheikhs, that is, he did not belong to the clan or tribe of the area, which some thought about when they saw him. He was one of those landowners who do not live in the village, but only use it, and therefore prefer to deal with fruits rather than with roots. The ruler gave them lands, and the peasants living on these lands worked on them.

The one who asked to speak stood up when the chairman of the meeting allowed him to speak, and everyone understood that he was a landowner from the urban population, lived in the city and managed his land plot in the village through intermediaries.

He said:

- I have no personal feelings towards the king, especially after Under the influence of Zabiba, he joined the mob and became one of them. I do not prefer those rulers who rule on the basis of some principles and moral values, but I look at anything based on my own interests. I know that my statement on values will not please the vast majority of those gathered here, especially since here we mix famous people with unknown ones, faces we know with the faces of those we have met only by walking the whip across their backs. The only thing I care about, I say for all classes present, is my own interests, the interests of my family, our righteous well-being, which we then gained on our foreheads, as well as the fate of our investments in the village.

When he said "sweat on our foreheads," many laughed, mocking him, and one of those sitting next to him said so that everyone could hear:

- That's for sure. And in this room the sweat on your forehead has increased. And don't be ashamed say that? You sweat from the heaviness of your belly, which you then ate on the foreheads of the peasants suffering from injustice and tyranny. And the evidence that you

you're telling a lie - there are no traces of the sun's rays on your face, which they didn't touch. Another thing is my sun-burnt face, from which more than one skin has already fallen off, so my black eyes cannot be found on this face if you don't know where they are.

The hall was drowned in applause.

And the landowner continued:

- I said that many may not like my words, and yet I like them and perhaps some others. I swear on my faith that my words are understood by those who have land and who use the labor of other people on it, and not their own and not the labor of their sons. But unlike them, I talk about it openly, while others prefer to remain silent.

Do you know why I speak and they are all silent? Because I can neither read nor write and do not strive for power. But there are also those here who hope to occupy a high position under the new government, be it royal or any other. That is why they strive to gain the love of those sitting in this room and carefully watch how, after each of their words, satisfaction or dissatisfaction is reflected in the eyes of those listening. Isn't that what those who want to get to power do through those people on whom the decision depends? Do you know why I'm not looking for a place in the new government? Because I don't want to burden myself with a title, I don't want to be constrained by obligations. I simply use power for my own purposes, for my own good. Doesn't a free person have the right to defend his interests?

My way of defending my interests is this: I use the powers that be through my position and with the help of my money. I am a large landowner, the owner of beautiful palaces, the owner of servants and slaves, the owner of a retinue and guards. Do you know how I use power? There are people who listen to my words, and sometimes to my demands, because I spend part of my huge fortune on those who can serve me. I give money to the chief of police, and he obeys me and uses his whip against anyone who rebels in my fields and not only in the fields. I give to the tax collector and he reduces the land tax, and what I gave him comes back to me with interest. This is what I do with anyone in a position of power. It is in my interest to give to them in order to receive even more. I invite them to a table of wine and gambling and listen to them talk about imports and exports, about domestic and foreign markets, and then I strike an unexpected blow to increase my wealth. My power lies in strengthening my wealth, and those who do not have money are deprived of power.

What privileges would I receive from the new government if I became one of those in power? Will she give me more privileges than those I enjoy now? Will it add land? The power that listens to the wishes of the people and proceeds from all of them is not able to give me more than what I already have.

I inherited what I have from my father. Do you know how? My father, may Allah have mercy on him, invited the king and his courtiers, ministers and other major officials to a feast at which thousands of dishes of various types were served, from camel meat to poultry. He covered the ground with silk from the outer gates of the royal palace to the doors of his house. This feast cost him hundreds of thousands of shekels, and to this was added a loan taken from a Jew, after they agreed with him that this money would be returned with the interest that the Jewish moneylender demanded. Wine and desire arose in their heads, caused by the women whom my father had specially called there, and the Jew cried out, after he raised the cup for the king's health and wished him to reign for a long time:

- What reward does the owner who sheltered us deserve, O great king? The king asked:

- What do you mean by this, Shamil?

Shamil replied:

"I'm just asking, great king, how the king will thank the owner and whether he will gratitude corresponds to what is said about royal generosity.

Calling his chief gatekeeper to his attention, the king said publicly:

- In gratitude to the owner for his hospitality, let him choose any of my lands kingdoms that he will travel on horseback from sunrise to sunset. All these lands will be his property, and let him use the labor of those peasants who live on these lands or to the right and left of the path of his horse as far as the eye can see. All this is for him, and may he be enriched."

So I received these lands according to the will of my father, may Allah be merciful to him. The Jew gave my father his maid as a token of gratitude for borrowing money from him. My father married a maid, and I became the fruit of this marriage and my father's favorite among all my brothers from other women. And my father bequeathed to me most of his wealth.

Therefore, I am not greedy, and the lands that I have are quite enough for me. But I want to find out one thing. Are you thinking of limiting land ownership or leaving everything as it is? Are you going to create a special lease order and make life difficult for us by giving the peasants the opportunity to rebel against us, or not? And most importantly, will you leave us with power over our money or will you interfere with how we manage it? After hearing your answer, which I hope will be sincere, as my words were sincere, I will decide who I am with and in which direction I should go. It may turn out that royal power will be dearest to me.

* * *

One of the resistance members raised her hand. The Chairman allowed her to speak, and she rose, according to the tradition that had arisen from the beginning of this meeting, or at least from the speech of the Emir Hunter, who rose and stood until he had told those present his whole story from beginning to end. She greeted the chairman of the meeting and thanked her Lord, the god of the people and the army, and not the god of kings, emirs and merchants living in luxury, and everyone connected with their interests, and said:

- I am a peasant's daughter. We are cultivating the land that my father leased from state for a very large fee. Our land is located at the outer wall of the city not far from the summer palace of one of the emirs. One of the princesses, when she wanted to unwind, came to our vineyard to watch us work. It was clear from the nature of her questions that she was a smart girl and wanted to know what was going on outside her palace, and it just so happened that the closest place to it was our land, on which we grew grapes, harvested them and sold them. If we couldn't sell the harvest, we dried the grapes and ate raisins with bread all winter. I was a girl then, at the age when I was still called a child, but I remember well everything I want to tell our meeting about, and I won't get anything wrong. My two sisters and I tried to get ahead of each other and quickly give her the rug when we noticed her heading towards our vineyard in the evening. And her father himself brought her the best bunch of grapes. She dressed in dibaj and silks and smelled of such incense that I did not know about and still do not know. And when she left, we ran after her like hunting dogs to catch the smell of her incense, which remained in the air for some time after her departure. And so, when she accepted the grapes from my father's hands more than once, my mother decided that she was deliberately delayed after sunset in order to prevent us from milking the cow, and that now they would let the calf go to the cow, deciding that we had already milked it. This meant that we would be left without dinner, because we divided the cow's milk between our family and her calf, or rather, the cow gave only enough milk to feed him, and did not allow herself to be milked when there was only milk left in the udder for the calf. I think the reason for my mother's irritation was jealousy of the princess. She was afraid that the princess would take my father away from her, although this was far from reality, and not at all that our milk would disappear. The day after the princess left, I saw my mother take a sickle and, putting it to my father's throat, said:

"If this happens again, I will cut your throat." Leave everything to me. My duty is to receive guests in our home and vineyard. I will wash the grapes and serve them to her in a basin or on a platter.

And then she said with a smile:

- From that day on, my father no longer dared to do what he was not supposed to do. As you can see, a woman is quite capable of resisting life and even her husband.

The audience laughed, and she continued:

- The princess's visits to us were repeated every now and then, and she tried to prolong her stay in our house. And when she returned to her palace, she walked around the vineyard, walked along another road that led her to the walls of the palace, and entered the palace through a side door. And when my mother and I approached the door with her, she asked me to wait and whispered about something to the old woman who was waiting for her, and then she gave us a sign to either stay where we were or leave, and we left. Later we learned everything from her. One day we told her that we had no more grapes to treat her to, because the king's servants had stopped letting us into our vineyard at night. And this led to the fact that there were no grapes left there after people began to come there at night, and we could not find out what kind of people they were, because the king's servants did not allow us to approach the vineyard.

The princess said that this was the reason why she burdened us with her frequent visits.

Seeing the bewilderment on our faces, she said:

- The reason is the constant feasts of emirs and princesses. When they and their guests, men and women get tired of sitting in the palace and the wine goes to their heads; they run around the palace and play hide and seek according to animal rules. Women hide from men or pretend to hide, men turn away under the supervision of an old woman who makes sure that they do not peep and that the women have time to hide. Then, at a signal from the old woman, the men began to look for women in the vineyard, and if one of them desired the one who wanted her, she would make some movement so that he would find her. And if the one who happened to be nearby was not nice to her, she huddled to the ground, like a partridge that hides from the hunter and does not give itself away, even if he steps on her.

"I," said the princess, "could not put up with these customs and this behavior and, so as not to embarrass myself and not disturb the guests, I ran away to you. That's why I was in no hurry to return to the palace until I was sure that everyone had left it and were busy with their games. Then I went to my room and locked myself in there.

The princess continued her story:

- But that's not the only reason why I burdened you with my visits, distracting you from business, which, as I understood after talking with you, you had plenty of. The reason is also that among the wild cats chasing their victims, there was one emir whose face I didn't want to see, and I tried not to even talk to him.

Frankly, I was surprised by the princess's words, especially when she said that this emir said that he loved her. I was surprised, because this is not how I imagined the princess and the emir, when in the long winter months we listened to the stories of old people about kidnapped princesses and emirs, wounded during a war or conspiracy. I was surprised by the princess's words that she did not want to stay in the palace because of the persecution of the emir, who said that he loved her. She did not understand how someone who loves can give the object of his love to another.

"This emir," she said, "knew how I dressed, but when I hid from him with everyone, didn't try to find me at all. When I made him notice me, he did not pay attention to me and went to another. And when, without noticing me, another hunter approached me, he whispered something in his ear, and it was clear that he was telling him where I was hiding, so that he would take care of me while the emir himself was with the other. When my mother began to question me, I told her that I would not allow anyone else to approach me, that I was tired of all this, that I could no longer see the one who was called my betrothed, that I was tired of the silence of the palace, its food, clothes, relationship. That's why I went to where a person is closest to Allah, the earth and people - to the village, and your house turned out to be the closest. And if I had to choose, I would probably say that you are closest to my soul.

Having said this, she began to sob so much that my mother began to kiss her head to ease her suffering, and tell her that the emir was a despicable coward and a scoundrel. But then she sat down next to her and asked:

“But it can't be so, my dear, that all this is in the behavior of the emir only for you.” it seemed like it? What if he didn't find you by chance, and not on purpose, by some design?

Then my mother said:

- I, your sister, do not understand how your betrothed emir could, if he said that loves you, to participate in such games? Isn't a man a wall for a woman? This scoundrel behaved in such a way that he became not a wall for you, but a gateway to hell.

When my father intervened in the conversation, she said:

- She hated everything in her life, hated all the things that she were given. She was treated like the chickens that an old woman keeps in a chicken coop, fearing that a jackal or a fox would get close to them. The old woman feeds the chickens and waters them, takes the eggs, places them, and then nurtures the chickens.

The princess cried out in annoyance:

- We became like chickens, only with the difference that the old woman guarded her chickens from the fox, and those who were responsible for our protection locked us in the palace not from foxes and jackals, but to isolate us from the people, so that we would not be imbued with his ideas and would not learn about his life - and all this under the pretext of preserving palace traditions, the traditions of kings and emirs That's why I liked your life. It seemed that she was close to my soul, that my soul was in her. Can a person say that he lives if he does not smell the earth, the smell of a real person as he is, if he does not prepare food with his own hands, does not put on his own clothes, does not wash his body without spies and helpers? Life in the palace is full of false images and colors. The air there is trapped between thick walls, and even the animals that live in the palaces are different from the wild animals, which reflect all the richness and liveliness of nature.

“Do you understand, unfortunate one,” the woman turned to the landowner, who said before her - that the new regime deserves to be the regime of the people?

And when he answered her:

- Yes, because among the people there are noble people, as evidenced by that the princess who came to you and about whom you told us.

The woman said:

- I'm not saying that under the tsarist regime there are no noble people at all, but he didn't contributes to the strengthening and unity of the people, starting with those who live in the main royal palace and ending with the very last servant. And, above all, it does not contribute to the strengthening and protection of the people. And if exceptions like the princess I told you about appear among the emirs and princesses, they are rare. So, is it permissible for us to create law and central authority based on exceptions, or should we start from the majority of people to make any decision and law? Is it right to confront the people with the unknown, when it is unknown who will inherit power from their father, even if the current sovereign taking power is good? Do you want, dear landowner, for your house to be surrounded by a fence, so that it has a door to which you have the key, or do you want something else? We want the people to become a fence for the homeland and for the key to this homeland to be in reliable hands, in the hands of someone whom the people know. We want people to be able to choose on objective grounds who is right for them, and that this does not happen under the influence of money or social status. So that the basis for choice is not inheritance, but personal qualities, a person's suitability for the place he occupies and his ability to perform certain duties. What would you prefer, dear landowner, for your cow to bear from a bull whose breed is known for an abundance of milk and meat, or from a bull whose breed is unknown to you?

Then the landowner asked her:

- What do you mean?

- If you don't understand what I mean, then by what right do you own everything? these lands on which people work like slaves? Are not a cow and a bull the same reality of peasant life as the king and queen are the reality of royal power, which you wish to prosper? We do not know the family of our kings' maternal uncles, dear landowner, and sometimes we do not know the family of their paternal uncles, just as we do not know the family of that Jew's maidservant whom he gave to your father.

- Is it so important for you, commoner, to know my roots? - asked the landowner. And the representative of the resistance, whose name was Zahra, answered him:

- You're right, I'm the daughter of the common people, but I'm the daughter of a man whom everyone knows. Everybody knows his character, his roots. I am the daughter of a man of the people, but if anyone wants to know more, I am the daughter of such and such a man, and everyone knows who. People know the origin of my father, my grandfather, my uncle and his father, and his grandfathers; and so I can list the names of my grandfathers and all kinds of uncles even up to the fiftieth generation. Can you name the names of your grandfathers and uncles at least up to the third?

- Is this really so important for the authorities?

- Yes, it is important, because the fruit of a good tree is good, and the bad tree has bad fruit. Anyone who does not know his uncles and brothers, of course, is not embarrassed by the fact that others do not know their roots. Under the cover of family ties, a foreigner can infiltrate power and rule our people and our nation. And then his rule will become for us the road to shame and humiliation, and not to greatness and glory, and his power will not be a wall for the state. It's another matter if the ruler is educated and reliable. Then, I want to ask you, is the son of one who is endowed with enormous power braver on the battlefields than those who are poorer than him?

- What do your words mean?

- My words mean a lot for the result we came to in our

conversation.

The landowner said:

- It's all about training and education. The way a father raises his son. And she clarified:

- Education and environment are important. The landowner answered:

- Yes, and Wednesday.

And she said:

- Have you raised your son so that he becomes, as he should be, a soldier? He replied:

- I raised peasants on my lands, and there are many more of them than my one son, and they became good fighters. They protect their land, and the army can only benefit from them.

- It wasn't you who prepared them for the army, it was poverty that made them this way, and even concepts and foundations that shape their souls and bodies. The luxury of your home prevents your sons from becoming good warriors. Luxury does not allow them to know life and taste it, and their mother did not teach them patriotism and the national concepts of our country and our people. What's even worse is that your children's nannies are foreigners and their teachers are foreigners. As well as the fact that you teach them to read and write, imitating how this is done in the palaces of kings and emirs here and in neighboring kingdoms, and therefore they are not capable of leading an army to fight for honor, and we do not expect courage from them ever since they departed from us and from our God. The princess I told you about is now in our house, where she has found shelter. We protect her and protect her, she lives with us. We consider her an older sister, lest you or anyone else say that ordinary people like us are not capable of devotion and gratitude, after you made your money from us, which killed your conscience and honor. "And if you want to convince the participants in the resistance," she said forcefully, "that it is necessary to preserve royal power and leave you your allotments,

which you stole, like your father, from our people, giving us the luxurious dresses of your wives and their jewelry in order to appease us, I think that you will not be able to convince everyone. But if you give away to the people what the kings and emirs have, if you give away what the merchants illegally acquired, everything you have, you will become our first candidate for power. We will surround you like walls, protect you and strengthen you. Are you ready to deceive the hopes of those who have long since rotted away? Are you ready for decisive action that does not tolerate bargaining and uncertainty?

A storm of applause broke out in the hall, after which exclamations were heard for the glory of the people, for the glory of the brilliant heroines and valiant warriors, for the glory of the army. Curses were heard against cowards, traitors and those who profited at the expense of the people.

* * *

So they were sitting in the hall when a man came and whispered in the ear of the chairman of the meeting that the king had died in his palace and that this news had been delivered by his chief palace servant.

The chairman of the meeting told everyone about this news:

- We are all from Allah and we return to Him. Allah explains what we cannot explain, because he is the wisest of wise men. Truly, death is fair. We are obliged to accompany the one who was the king of our state on his final journey, firstly by paying tribute to him, and secondly by following the tradition pleasing to Allah. All people must follow this tradition, and then we will return to the discussion of our affairs and continue it with new energy and a new mood.

May Allah be merciful to all who died! Glory to the heroes!

Glory to Zabiba!

Let Zabiba live!

Let the people live!

Long live the army!

How this book was prepared

I had to go to Moscow and talk with an employee of the press service of the Iraqi embassy. A trivial matter that Vadim Nazarov, the "Amforovsky" editor-in-chief, asked me about.

But exactly that night, when I was shaking in the ninth compartment car of the Red Arrow, the embassy was robbed. Unknown masked men entered the building, tied up the guards and took away \$3,000,000.

I never got inside the building cordoned off by the police. I had to talk with the embassy press secretary, Dr. Muhammad, at his home.

* * *

"Amphora" began preparing this book for printing simultaneously with the landing of the first US commandos on the Iraqi shore. The publishing house's leaders, like everyone else, were confident that the war would last a long time. That the Yankees will get stuck in the Iraqi desert much more than they once got stuck in the Viet Cong jungle.

And the war lasted three weeks. This is the superiority of modern military technology! - the television talking heads wailed.

Forgive me for saying a platitude, but I'll say it anyway. The only military technology that Americans have today is a green paper bill with a portrait of a bearded man. The Americans have never had any other superweapon.

During the bombing of Serbia, the Americans promised to demonstrate bombers invisible to the eye, designed like spaceships from Star Wars. And they demonstrated Albanian street children who, for fifty bucks, would throw a radio beacon in the right place, which the missiles would target. The mustachioed Serbs caught the boys, took away the beacons, threw them into the courtyard of the Chinese consulate - and the missiles, like sheep, flew to where they were supposed to fly - also into the courtyard.

The same system was demonstrated in Iraq. The guys from the State Department frayed with

the right people from Saddam's circle. And they gave orders to the army: retreat, lay down their arms, do not resist. The technology is, of course, effective. But not very advanced.

* * *

The Iraqi consultant for the publication of this book was Dr. Muhammad Mutalib. It was with him that I had to talk in Moscow before the book was sent to the printing house.

Doctor Muhammad called me several times in St. Petersburg, insisted on a meeting, and hurried me to come. On the eve of my departure to Moscow, my colleagues asked what he wanted from me? I didn't know what he wanted.

- Maybe he's an Iraqi intelligence officer?

- Don't know. Don't think.

- Maybe he wants to introduce you to Saddam himself? Maybe Saddam is hiding in Moscow?

- Hardly. What should he do in Moscow? If Saddam had been hiding in Moscow, he would have been killed long ago handed over to the Americans.

-Have you heard that the Yankees are paying \$25 million for Hussein's head? I wish you were with him brought together, huh?

All night while driving to Moscow, I thought: could I hand over a stranger to death if they gave me \$25 million for it? Would I then be able to spend this pile of money, knowing that somewhere in the ground the body of an elderly mustachioed man was rotting, who was killed so that I could get my money?

The point is not whether I like Saddam or not. The fact is that I personally don't need a penny of THAT kind of money.

However, I still had no chance of earning \$25 million. Dr. Muhammad did not suggest that I meet the fugitive Iraqi leader. We just met, discussed the technical problems associated with the release of Zabiba and the Tsar, just ate fruit and chatted about the unbearable Moscow heat.

Before saying goodbye to the doctor, I even managed to look at photographs from his personal archive. In some he was photographed with Hussein's sons. They were tall. They were surrounded by a crowd of people. They smiled.

Just the day before yesterday I was sitting at home, in St. Petersburg, watching the news. The main news was that, flattered by the promised millions, someone leaked information to the Americans about where these smiling people depicted in the photographs were hiding.

Saddam's sons were not taken alive. They were simply shot. Then the pathologists touched up their mutilated faces a little, sewed up the broken skin on their chest and neck with thread, and presented it to the journalists in this form.

* * *

Dr. Muhammad was a very polite man. In parting, he shook my hand for a long time and said:

- You understand: now this is the number one topic in the world! The whole world is now watching what's happening with us!

Funny Iraqi man. Big child. Of course, the world does not care deeply about each of the Iraqis individually and their entire country as a whole. Nobody cares about a dozen American corpses every week. To Iraqi villages dying of thirst. The world has enough of its own worries.

In fact, everyone has long accepted that Americans are strong. There is no other like it. It's up to them to decide. Regarding the planned operation in Iraq, the White House at least pretended to consult with others. No one is even going to consult about the upcoming purges in Iran and North Korea, and those around them are only timidly wondering: is it possible to have fewer corpses? is it forbidden? no, that's just us... we were just wondering.

You can be outraged by this as much as you like. Nothing can be changed, but to be indignant -

even to the point of the monkey's conspiracy. This has always been the case: whoever is strong is right. Now the Americans are strong. They know this very well. And they intend to use it. Who will have objections?

Anyone who the Americans don't like will have a lot of problems in the near future. Every single one of them. This is as true as the fact that the last nuclear warheads made in the USSR expire in nine years. Exactly nine years later. In 2012.

Until 2012, we have plenty of time for the whole country to have fun and not give a damn about the problems of funny Iraqis.

Ilya Stogoff

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